The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine

MARCH 50¢

32 EXTRA PAGES

rle Stanley Gardner

John P. Marquand

Hugh Pentecost

Wade Miller

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Steve Frazee

Margaret Scherf

ANNIVERSARY

19th

ISSUE

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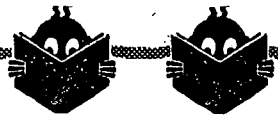

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AUTHOR: **HUGH PENTECOST**

TITLE: ***Far, Far Better Thing***

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALES: New York City and Long Island

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *Luigi Bromelli was a charming rogue who belonged to an older century—when "Don Juans" wore swords. His effect on women, in this day and age, was colossal. And if it weren't for the happy blackmailer . . .*

EDITORS' FILE CARD

A MAN HAS A RIGHT TO A HANGover on the morning after the evening when he has destroyed his life, lost the woman he loves, and been personally responsible for the whole disaster because of a childish desire for revenge. But having the right to a hangover didn't make Dick Loring feel any better. It had seemed probable for some weeks that he was losing Shelly. It was certain now, after the juvenile way he had played his cards at the very moment when he might have won the game.

Losing Shelly was the only thing that mattered. The big flat-topped desk behind which he sat didn't matter; nor his position as vice-president of a successful Madison Avenue advertising agency; nor his handsome annual salary supplemented by generous bonuses. Only Shelly counted, and tonight when he got home there would be a little formal note telling him to go fly a kite; that she had gone off with Luigi. Or perhaps, because she was so honest really, she would be waiting to tell him to his face.

It was bitter medicine to lose to a man like Luigi Bromelli. Luigi was misplaced in this century, in this way of life. He was a romantic in an age when even the glamorous figures of our theater make their

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reputations by the exciting way in which they scratch and sweat.

So many things about Luigi were apocryphal that Dick couldn't be sure that he had ever really been an Olympic fencing champion; but he did know that Luigi belonged in an age when men were swords, when the manly art of self-defense involved ballet techniques, and when poisonous acids were placed in delicate cookery instead of being thrown in a man's eyes by hopped-up hoodlums.

Luigi was physically handsome. He reminded Dick of pictures of the late John Barrymore as the young Hamlet. Despite this almost feminine grace, Luigi's masculinity preceded him into a room like the announcement of a J. Arthur Rank movie in which a Nubian slave batters on an enormous gong.

The effect on women of all ages was nothing short of colossal—one of the few occasions today, Dick thought, when that word could be properly used to describe something larger than a midget. Born of an American mother and an Italian father, Luigi, if you didn't like him, could be said to live by his wits, and if you did like him, by his charm. He had no regular income or means of support. He was a worldly man, the most complete sophisticate Dick had ever met.

And Shelly! Shelly was a lovely animal, spoiled by her father's oil well millions, imagining that she was sophisticated and that sophistication was her dish; but actually she was unbelievably naive, Dick thought, uncomplex, an utterly charming and beguiling child.

That was the root of the trouble. She was not sophisticated enough to see this thing with Luigi as merely a summer romance. It was an event by which the world was to be turned upsidedown.

Among other things, Luigi was a magnificent horseman. One of the few incontrovertible facts about him was that he was perhaps the best "gentleman rider" in the world. He had won nearly every great steeplechase event in this country and abroad—but always on someone else's horse!

Bradley Trowbridge, Shelly's father, had perhaps the best stable of hunters and stake jumpers in existence. Bradley, charmed by Luigi and shrewdly aware of his gifts as a horseman, had made Luigi almost a member of his family, with a calculating eye on next year's Grand National. Luigi amused Bradley and helped to fill the gap left in his life by Shelly's marriage to Dick. Bradley's wife had died when Shelly was a baby, and Bradley had brought Shelly up, worshipped her, smiled indulgently at her whims and enthusiasms, and would have bought her the Taj Mahal if she'd indicated even a passing interest in owning it.

But Bradley was sensible in many ways. He had thoroughly approved of Dick's refusal to live with his

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bride at Bradley's hotel-sized Long Island estate. He admired Dick's pride which made him refuse to use a cent of Bradley's money. He and Dick got along famously. Dick had agreed to take a summer cottage about five miles from Bradley's place. You could be too proud, he told himself. Shelly, who rode beautifully herself, needn't be deprived of the chance to ride Bradley's string of horses. But Dick had not counted on the fact that the day would come when Shelly would have Luigi to ride with.

Shortly it became a scandal. Even a blind man could see that the Lorings' marriage was on the rocks. Shelly and Luigi rode together every day while Dick slaved at his Madison Avenue desk; they traveled the countryside in the sports car supplied to Luigi by Bradley Trowbridge; they danced together at the Country Club teas, Shelly's golden hair resting against Luigi's dark cheek. The Nubian slave was beating the gong with alarming vigor.

One day Dick had a chance to leave the office early. Shelly was not at home when he got there. He decided to go to the club for a swim. He was just starting down the pier when he saw Shelly and Luigi cavorting about in the afternoon sun on the float about fifty yards out from shore.

Dick withdrew to the seclusion of a beach umbrella and sat there morosely watching his vanishing bride. Presently someone sat down next to him; Dick turned and saw that it was his father-in-law. Bradley Trowbridge stared moodily out at the couple on the float.

"She wants him," Dick said grimly. "What am I to do about it?"

"I wish I could tell you, my boy."

"I could give up my job and stay here and ride horses and swim and tea-dance and bar-hop—" Dick drew a deep breath—"and do none of them as well as Luigi does. How the hell do you think he would be as an advertising executive?"

"Terrible," Bradley said.

"She's your daughter," Dick said. "You might try spanking her."

"I have to stand by her, right or wrong," Bradley said unhappily.

"Luigi will make you a lovely if expensive son-in-law—after Shelly divorces me," Dick said. "I hope you'll all be very happy."

"If sending him away would do the trick, I'd send him packing," Bradley said. "But she'd only follow him. She's never let go of anything she wanted and I, God forgive me, have never done anything but help her hold to whatever she wants." He stared down at his big competent hands. "You're one of the finest fellows I know, Dick. When Shelly married you I couldn't have been more delighted. You're the perfect husband for her —or will be, if and when she ever grows up. I love you like a son. But I have to stick by Shelly, wrong as she may be."

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"Well, it's nice to know I can get a recommendation from you if I ever decide to marry again," Dick said.

"Don't be bitter," Bradley said. "You haven't got a chance if you become bitter. You've got to play your cards close to the vest."

"What cards?" Dick asked.

Bradley stared at him blankly, then slowly shook his head.

So there was Dick, adrift in a rowboat on the stormy sea of matrimony and without any oars. He had a conviction that Shelly was going to lower the boom the next morning at breakfast, so he made a fictitious excuse for having to catch the early commuter train. It was probably only putting off the crusher until evening.

He was sitting in his office glooming helplessly over the situation when Miss Grant, his secretary, interrupted thoughts of murder and suicide.

"There is a Mr. Collins to see you," she said.

"What Mr. Collins?" Dick asked, pulling himself back into the present.

"Mr. George Collins. He says it's personal—very personal."

"I don't know any George Collins. Ask him what it's about."

Miss Grant returned after a few moments and handed Dick a folded piece of paper. "He wouldnt tell me," Miss Grant said, and waited.

Dick unfolded the paper and read: *About your wife and Luigi Bromelli.* The paper shook in his fingers. A dark smoldering rage seemed to well up inside him. Some cheap blackmailer. Well, Mr. George Collins might make an excellent substitute punching bag for Luigi.

"Show him in and then get!" Dick said to the surprised Miss Grant.

Mr. George Collins was something of a surprise to Dick. He had expected some furtive hanger-on from Bradley's stable, or a shifty-eyed bartender from some roadhouse. Mr. Collins was young—not more than thirty—distinctly Brooks Brothers, with a pleasant, actually ingratiating smile. He looked at Dick's grim, angry face.

"I know what you must be thinking, Mr. Loring," he said. His voice was cultivated, deep, pleasant. "I think you've got it all wrong."

"Have I?"

"You think I've come to offer to sell you some dirt about Mrs. Loring and Bromelli."

"Haven't you?"

"Your wife is not a part of it—that is, not a part of what I want to sell you. But the effect on your wife might be gratifying to you."

"You seem to know a great deal about me and my wife," Dick said dangerously.

"I know a great deal about Mr. Bromelli," Collins said. "Look, Mr. Loring, let's get down to business. I am what might be called an un-

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employed private eye. A recent case took me to England. There I learned something about Mr. Bromelli that might be useful to you. Frankly, I have heard the gossip about Mrs. Loring and Mr. Bromelli. I thought you could use the information I have. I think, if you had it, you might even get rid of Mr. Bromelli."

"And your price?" Dick asked, the angry pulse still beating at his temples.

"I'm not greedy, Mr. Loring. A fifty dollar bill will close the deal."

Pretty small potatoes for a blackmailer, Dick thought. But it was worth fifty bucks just to hear him out. Dick took five tens from his wallet and handed them to Mr. Collins.

"All right, Mr. Collins, shoot."

Collins smiled cheerfully. "Bromelli was caught in a card swindle at the Cavendish Club in London. They had him cold, but the matter was hushed up because one of his victims was a member of the royal family. But if it was thrown into the open they'd have to prosecute and Bromelli would be faced with a jail sentence. Even worse for him, I suspect, that particular door to income would suddenly and permanently be closed on his whole sponging way of life."

"The proof?" Dick asked. His smile was bitter. "I suppose that will cost a good deal more than fifty bucks."

"I don't think you will need proof," Mr. Collins said. "Simply mention it to Bromelli and I think he will recognize it as an exit cue."

Dick was silent for a moment. "And that's all you want of me—that fifty dollars?"

Collins's smile was winning. "I feel like a heel taking that," he said. "But—well, my landlady is most persistent. Nice meeting you, Mr. Loring."

After Collins had gone Dick sat for a long time staring at the wall opposite his desk. His impulses were unsporting and murderous. Finally he picked up the phone on his desk and put in a person-to-person call to Luigi at Bradley Trowbridge's estate.

They had met at a table in a dark corner of a little bar just off Madison Avenue. Luigi sprawled elegantly in the booth opposite Dick.

"I have been waiting for this, Dick," Luigi said. "I have known that sooner or later we would have to talk—man to man."

"Have you indeed?" Dick said, suppressing his rage.

Luigi shrugged. "It is not my fault, Dick, that you cannot hold your wife. If she wants to be free of you and marry me, it is not my fault."

"You and Shelly have discussed marriage?"

"One of the reasons you are losing your wife," Luigi said, "is that you apparently do not know her at

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all. She would not discuss such a thing with me until she had first discussed it with you. She is a girl of fine principles. She will tell you first before she allows the subject to come up between us. But she *will* tell you, and she *will* allow the subject to come up."

"You are probably right," Dick said. "But that isn't why I asked you to meet me here."

"No?"

"No. I wanted to talk to you about the affair of the Cavendish Club," Dick said.

Luigi had been in the act of raising a martini to his lips. Very slowly and quite steadily he lowered the glass to the table. "I see," he said after a moment.

It had been fifty bucks' worth all right, Dick thought. No doubt of that.

"You propose," Luigi said quietly, "to expose that unfortunate business in the hope that it will alienate Shelly from me?"

"Yes," Dick said.

"You're a fool," Luigi said without emotion. "She would stick to me even tighter. She would hate you for using such a tactic."

"But Bradley Trowbridge wouldn't stick to you, nor any of the other wealthy people off whom you live."

"You think the prospect of poverty might drive Shelly away from me?" Luigi asked, giving Dick a maddeningly superior smile.

"No," Dick said. "But I think it might drive *you* away from *her*."

"And if it doesn't?"

"Then at least I'll know she has a chance for happiness. I'll know you love her more than you love Brad Trowbridge's dough!"

Dick's heart almost stopped beating as he watched Luigi pick up his martini and sip it thoughtfully. Then Luigi said, "It is true. I wouldn't make the best of husbands for her. My way of life—"

Air escaped Dick's lungs in a long sigh.

"But she may not take 'no' for an answer," Luigi said.

"You can make her take 'no' for an answer," Dick said. And in that moment he dropped the ace of trumps and played a measly trey instead. What a rat this guy was! And what a little fool Shelly had been to be taken in by him. She deserved a small beating on her own.

"Just how do I make her?" Luigi had asked.

Through a dark red cloud of anger Dick told him.

"I shall stay in town tonight," he said. "You will see Shelly. You will tell her that you know what she intends to do—break with me, free herself, and marry you. You will tell her that you wouldn't think of marriage to her. You will tell her that if the day ever comes that you choose to marry it will not be someone like her. You will tell her she has demonstrated that fact that she's a playgirl by flirting behind my back. You will tell her she is

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the most desirable woman in the world but that she has proved she is not a safe, dependable wife for any man. You will tell her that if you ever do choose to marry it will be to someone on whom you can depend."

"That is a pretty stiff order," Luigi said.

"Otherwise, the affair of the Cavendish Club," Dick said.

"And you would expect me, then, to leave this part of the world?"

"I would expect you to recognize this as your exit cue," Dick said, quoting Mr. Collins.

After a long time a slow, mocking smile moved Luigi's lips. "'It is a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done,'" he said. "'It is a far better place I go to—'. But perhaps I misquote."

Dick thought he recognized disappointment in Shelly's voice when he phoned to tell her that business was going to keep him in town overnight. He thought he understood why. She had prepared herself to give him the axe that night.

It was a wretched evening for him, spent alone, eating food he didn't taste, drinking more than he should have, visualizing the scene between Luigi and Shelly. Luigi, the heel, would play the scene to the hilt. He would make a romantic exit. He would use the dialogue Dick had written for him.

But what of Shelly? If she really loved the guy, hadn't he, Dick, played a pretty low trick on her? The more he thought of it, the lower Dick's spirits fell. He had let Luigi have it—both barrels. But in his rage he had arranged it so that Shelly would be humuliated and cheapened.

Could she recover from that? Wouldn't he have to tell her that Luigi had spoken his, Dick's words? Could he live in good conscience without telling her? If he didn't tell her he would feel even guiltier as time went on . . .

Dick, armed with his hangover, was feeling nothing but pain when he got to his office the next morning. He knew he must control the unbearable need to call Shelly. Either she had gone off with Luigi, heel or no heel, or she was sitting at home rejected, nursing her trampled pride.

In the cold light of morning he knew beyond a doubt that he had misplayed his hand badly. He would have to tell her the truth, he would have to take the consequences.

As he was coming to that decision, Miss Grant appeared. He was wanted at a casting session for the big new television account his agency had just been awarded.

Listening to actors audition was the last thing in the world Dick wanted to do, but it was his account. He left the office and went a couple of blocks up the street to the audition studio. When he let

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himself into the control booth the auditions had already started.

A curiously familiar voice was coming through the speaker into the booth. Dick glanced out through the glass panel and there, to his astonishment, he saw Mr. George Collins acting out a scene in the script—and acting it rather expertly.

"Since when are we casting our fictional detectives from real life?" Dick asked the director.

"I don't get you," the director said.

"Collins," Dick said. "A private eye acting a private eye."

"Are you feeling okay?" the director asked. "I don't know any Collins. The actor you're watching is Ted Laverick, one of the good new talents."

Dick tiptoed out of the booth and into the hallway outside the studio. He was trembling from head to foot. After an interminable wait a door opened and Ted Laverick came out into the hall. He saw Dick, did kind of a shuffle, and then stood smiling sheepishly.

"Well, Mr. Laverick?" Dick said, deadly calm. "False impersonation, blackmail—"

"Take it easy," Laverick said. His smile was disarming. "Your fifty bucks is right here in my wallet. I had to take it to convince you I was real. Did it work?"

"I think I see the whole thing quite clearly," Dick said. "That heel, Luigi, was looking for a way out. He hired you to give me a cock-and-bull story. God, how he must have been laughing to himself when I played the outraged husband for him."

"Hey, wait a minute!" Laverick said. "I never laid eyes on Luigi Bromelli in my life!"

"Then who did hire you?"

"Why, your wife, of course."

Dick's mouth dropped open like a gaping fish. Ted Laverick's face dissolved into a sort of mist, a face seen through scrim. His voice came from far away and Dick heard only key words and phrases.

"—visiting the Bennetts out near you—Country Club dance—your wife—seemed to think I could help her—told me—you wouldn't fight for her—thought maybe if you had a good weapon you would—friend from England, one of the horsey set, told her the Cavendish story—thought if you had it—well, she had to know if you really wanted her after making such a fool of herself—"

"Shut up," Dick said in a shaking voice. "I love you, Mr. Laverick. But—but what do I do now?"

Laverick gave him a boyish grin. "I shouldn't think it mattered much, Mr. Loring. It seems pretty obvious you want her and she wants you."

"Yes, but—"

Laverick handed over five ten dollar bills. "If you can get change for one of these there *is* a pay phone down the hall," he said.

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **NORMAN DANIELS**

TITLE: ***Two Sides to Everything***

TYPE: Cop Story

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *It was Alan Clark's first night alone as a cop on the beat. Follow a patrolman's lonely rounds as he grapples with a problem bigger to him than the crimes and misdemeanors of the dead and dark of night . . .*

ALAN CLARK DROPPED OFF THE TAG end of the platoon at Eighth and High Streets. He stood on the corner, and watched the rest of the men march off in a column of twos. Suddenly he felt very much alone, like an island that had unexpectedly sprouted in the middle of an ocean. He was a cop—and this was his first night alone on a beat.

He was to patrol a central area, too congested for radio car coverage, where back doors had to be tried, emergency traffic duty taken over, and a densely populated area guarded. In his brand-new uniform he felt conspicuous. The blackjack, handcuffs, persuader chain, flashlight, gun, and ammunition clip felt cumbersome and heavy. He carried his nightstick under his arm because he didn't quite know how to handle it gracefully.

He stood there while pedestrians swirled around him and wondered how it had happened, how he had come to be here, in uniform, in the first place. Unlike most kids, Alan Clark had never dreamed of becoming a policeman and during his growing years he'd given absolutely no thought to it—until that moment when he was at loose ends and saw the announcement in the newspapers that policemen were urgently needed.

He could quit tomorrow, or right now, if he chose. There was no

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law that said he couldn't, no contract to hold him. That old, old feeling came back to him. He fought it out in the battleground of his mind and felt weary because he'd fought a thousand undecisive battles like it before. There was never a definite conclusion. It was Alan's greatest fault, his heaviest burden: he couldn't make up his mind.

Faced with the necessity to make a decision, he always vacillated and fluttered and generally wound up still uncertain. It had been like that before he entered college. Should he study medicine or law? Or was he cut out to be an engineer of some sort? He didn't know. He couldn't set his sights on one goal, so he took three years of general college work and when he was squarely faced with the need to come to some decision, he joined the Army. Even that had been no easy task—there'd also been the Navy, the Marines, the Air Corps.

Getting his hitch over with—that was what he called it; and even Rae Sanderson, whom he was going to marry some day, believed it. She was sure he'd finally come up with a wise and honest answer and that they would be married after he'd served his enlistment.

But when he came out of the Army he still didn't know what to do. Should he go back into the service?—or should he finish college and then study law? He'd given up the idea of going in for medicine because he recognized his terrible weakness and realized he'd be quite incapable as a doctor whose diagnosis might waver between an appendix attack or a bellyache.

It was summer anyway, so he took refuge in the idea he didn't have to decide at once, and he looked for a job. He found two likely ones. The first entailed too much inside work, however. The second was partly a commission job and before he got around to choosing, both jobs were filled.

After he'd finished college he enrolled in law school. Then just as suddenly he withdrew his application, got his tuition back, and considered enrolling again, only now he wasn't sure which school. Somewhere in the shuffle of all this doubt and irresolution he became a cop.

His father guessed he'd last two weeks; his mother hoped it wouldn't be two days; and Rae silently prayed they'd get married soon and put an end to all this uncertainty. She was a small girl, a very pretty girl, but she couldn't remain a young and pretty twenty-five forever.

All these things filtered through Alan's mind as he made his way down a littered alley behind the row of small stores facing Main Street. He checked rear doors and windows and talked to himself. A psychology professor had once told him that most indecisive people talk to themselves: they need someone to argue the points with.

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"A cop," Alan muttered. "Eighty bucks take-home. Well, it's not *too* bad. There's a pension and it's steady. No lay-offs. Come bad times I'll work every day. And it's an honorable job—people look up to a cop, and swear at him behind his back. The work's dirty sometimes, and dangerous. In an emergency, work hours have no meaning. I'm theoretically on duty twenty-four hours a day. And a lawyer could make more handling one big case than a cop makes in a year. I should have gone to law school. What the hell happened? I was all set. I wanted to go—except that I couldn't get married for four more years, maybe six. Now I *can* get married—but should I? The pay's not enough, maybe. And being a cop is like a soldier going off to war—something like that, anyway. Who knows if a cop will come home again?"

He rattled the knob of the Emerson Haberdashery. The knob turned and the door opened. His mind was so filled with his own mental struggles that he almost closed the door again automatically and went on his way. Then it registered. An unlocked door meant somebody might be in a store that was supposed to be locked up for the night.

He drew his flashlight and his gun. Handling both those articles, plus keeping from falling over his nightstick, proved to be quite a feat. He closed the door with his foot and slid the latch so that if anybody tried to get away the intruder would have to spend a moment or two unlocking the door.

Which, his active mind immediately told him, wasn't so good either. If it kept the guy in, he might get so desperate he'd shoot. There were always two sides to everything.

Alan began to search the premises. It required little reasoning to guess that the owner had simply forgotten to lock the back door. By the telephone was the owner's home phone number. Alan dialed it and heard a man answer, with a background of music and laughing voices.

"This," he said sternly, "is Patrolman Alan Clark. You left the rear door of your store open."

The voice was a trifle annoyed. "Well now, Officer, you just lock it up for me and many thanks."

"Come down and lock it up yourself," Alan said. "And I mean now."

"Aw, we're having a party—it's my birthday. You wouldn't want the guest of honor to leave, would you?"

Alan said, "Of course not. Many happy returns of the day, Mr. Emerson. We'll send the bill to your store."

There was an unsubtle change in Mr. Emerson's voice. "What bill?"

"For the officer we'll have to put on duty in your store until morning. The usual charge is twenty bucks."

"But I don't want a cop . . ."

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Alan said, "We will not assume a responsibility that should be yours. Besides, if anything is missing you might think I swiped the stuff. So get here in ten minutes or a special cop comes in and you pay for all night if he even sets foot in the store."

The owner made it in sixteen minutes flat. Alan stood by while he checked around, glumly admitted nothing was missing, and thanked Alan not too gracefully. Alan had to get a move on to make his next duty call on time.

At eleven o'clock he did a spot of traffic duty at an intersection where theater crowds were swarming to restaurants and parking spaces. He became a bit flustered one moment, when he couldn't make up his mind whether to work the traffic in conjunction with the lights or keep it moving with arm and whistle. He decided on the latter and it worked out quite well. In twenty minutes the area was quiet again and he resumed his beat.

He was debating whether or not he should take his coffee in a diner a block farther along the street or in the café which had a restaurant bar. He weighed all the elements carefully and decided the man at the diner might be more apt to take his money than the man in the café, who had more reason to want a cop on his side.

"Take nothin' from nobody," Sergeant O'Hara had told him when he was in training and walking a daytime practice beat. "That way you owe nothin' to nobody, see?" Some of the words were garbled because the sergeant was eating a banana filched from a fruit stand outside Brandenhoffers' store, but the meaning was clear.

Then out of the café came two people moving with the exaggerated caution of those verging on a condition known as crocked. They were about forty, a handsome man and an attractive woman, both well dressed. They crossed the sidewalk to where an expensive car waited. The man unlocked the door, bowed the woman inside with more exaggeration, this time of politeness. He weaved around to the front of the car and got behind the wheel. He slammed the door and Alan opened it a second later.

"What's the idea, Officer?" the man demanded.

"The car key." Alan held out his hand.

"Now why do you want the key to my car?" the man asked.

"Paul," the woman said, "don't argue with a uniform."

"But it's my key and my car," Paul argued. He looked at Alan, focused a little better. "I assure you it is my car. I'm not stealing it . . ."

Alan said without a moment's hesitation, "If you move this car one foot from the curb I'll arrest you for drunken driving. Do I get the key?"

"Say," the woman said, "a cop with sense. Paul honey, he makes

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lots of sense. If I weren't so plastered myself, I'd know you're in no shape to drive."

Paul gave Alan the car key. "What'll I do, push it home?" he asked.

"I'll be around this part of my beat in an hour," Alan said. "If you have a sober friend here, I'll give him the key. Otherwise, go home, sleep it off, and pick up the key at the precinct house in the morning."

Paul-honey wanted to shake his hand. The woman wanted to kiss him. Alan lectured them out of this wonderful feeling of fraternization and left them in the middle of the sidewalk, both congratulating themselves on the close shave they'd had with the law.

An hour later they had a sober friend waiting, who explained it was their wedding anniversary and they'd celebrated perhaps a trifle too much. Everybody shook hands and this time the woman did kiss him. She smelled of expensive perfume and that made him think about Rae.

Five minutes before his next duty call he heard the fight and ran toward the alley where two men were intent on beating each other's brains out. One of them had his hair mussed, the other was unmarked, but the battle was a noisy one, staged in an atmosphere heavy with the smell of cheap muscatel.

He collared them, pulled them apart, and stepped between the two. This was a breach of the peace, possibly an assault, but nobody would benefit if he locked them up, and they might suffer far out of proportion to their offense. He turned them loose with a warning, and they stalked away, side by side, not talking until they spotted a red neon sign. They studied it, linked arms, and went in to the noise and the music and the bar.

Alan grinned and swung his nightstick with a surprising degree of efficiency. He wondered if this could be considered a quiet night. Well, he hadn't made an arrest yet.

"A cop," Sergeant O'Hara had said, between the bites on the banana, "ain't known for the number of arrests he makes but for the quality of 'em. Just make enough so they won't think you're layin' down on the job."

At 1:10 A.M. he thought he had something. The window went up with a bang and the woman's voice was shrill and frantic as she yelled the magic word all taxpayers use when they're in trouble—according to Sergeant O'Hara. She yelled, "Police! Help, police!"

Alan went up the steps of the old tenement house two at a time. The yelling was still going on, doors were opening up and down the hallways, and he had visions of murder or mayhem.

The woman was still screaming out the window when the man opened the door in answer to the

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banging of Alan's nightstick. He was in his undershirt. He was bald-headed, he was drunk, and he was mad.

"What're you making so much noise for?" he demanded of Alan, who heard only part of it because of the woman's steady bellowing. The man walked away, leaving the door open. He paused beside a scratched and worn table just inside the living-room door. A glass vase was set on a square of lace. He picked up the vase, looked at Alan, then threw the vase across the room.

"*My* vase," he said. "Lemme see you do somethin' about it."

Alan stuck the point of his club into the man's bulging stomach and pushed. The man retreated until he fell onto an old sofa. The woman stopped yelling long enough to fly at Alan.

"Whaddya tryin' to do to my husband, huh? What're you tryin' to do?"

The side of her face was swollen and maybe there'd be a medium-sized mouse around one of her eyes tomorrow; but if she wanted to protest the indignity of the police invading her home—even if she had called them—that was her business. Or so she said in plainer and saltier language. Her husband sat there nodding and holding his potbelly as if the nightstick had badly damaged it. Suddenly the man stood up and took a wild swing at his wife.

"You let the cop alone. He ain't done nothin' except come up here to stop your everlastin' nagging . . ."

Alan took a firm grip on the man's neck and the seat of his pants and rushed him down the stairs to the street. There was a call box on the corner. He unlocked it, set the dial to "Patrol Wagon," pulled the lever, and waited about twenty seconds until a radio car pulled up.

"Breach of the peace and assault," he said.

"Okay, rookie." The man beside the driver stuffed the prisoner in back. "Out to make a record for yourself in one night?"

Alan shook his head. "This man's wife already has a bruise. He might hurt her if I let him stay. So long, boys."

He resumed his beat. An arrest! Well, that was something. Not much of an arrest, but it had been necessary. He had never once thought otherwise. He remembered the cup of coffee he'd promised himself and had it in the diner, along with a Western sandwich and a slab of pie. Walking a beat worked up a fine appetite. He chatted with the short order cook, paid for his food over the half-hearted protests, walked out, and met his sergeant by appointment at Grand and Hart Streets.

"Good," the Sergeant approved his report of the open back door, the car key affair, the alley fight,

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and the family squabble. "Most cops think a beat is old-fashioned stuff, but I rode them radio patrol cars for three years and all I got was bored and the look of a waddling duck. Give me foot patrol any time, and if that makes me old-fashioned too, that's fine with me. Now, there's a joint on Carmody Street that has the look of a gambling house. I want you to keep an eye on it. Anybody goes in, keep count. There's a music store doorway across the street that'll hide you easy."

"Okay," Alan said. "See you again at three."

Around 1:50 there was a minor collision between a milk truck and a sedan. Most of the damage was to the tempers of the two men who claimed indemnities and threatened insurance companies as well as one another. Alan's appearance ended that. "No harm done," they said. "Just a small accident, nothing to it."

Alan watched the milk from the broken bottles trickle out the door beside the driver's wheel. He took down identifications, checked the brakes on both vehicles, studied the skid marks, and agreed it was a bad corner, even at this hour of the morning. It ought to have a traffic light. He intended to make a note of that in his report. He watched the two vehicles drive off, closed his notebook with a snap, and walked on.

He started checking alleys again. This time they were narrow and dark, rat-infested, shadowy. He found that he was breathing a little harder, walking a little softer. Someone could leap out of the darkness with a club or a knife or someone could put a bullet in his back and he'd never even have a chance. The brass buttons and the badge made him fair game for certain elements of society. He had to pause and mop away the sweat on his forehead.

He felt lonely, as if nobody else inhabited this entire planet. Small night sounds grew in intensity. Brakes that squealed blocks away sounded as if they went off in his ear. Somebody with hard heels ran along the sidewalk and the steps seemed to come his way at first, then they faded off. The steady clank-clank of a rubbish collecting truck was actually a comfort to hear, and somewhere a sleepless baby cried.

These were the night sounds which wiped away the fear that came with darkness and solitude. Without them there'd have been no end to his loneliness in this dark of the night.

Then he thought about Rae again. Should he marry her now? She'd have to be satisfied with a cop's pay and a cop's future—but she'd already said that was fine with her. A cop could get stripes and later a bar—maybe a couple of them. The big brass made a good living. There was always room at the top.

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But a patrolman! He'd always considered them somewhere near the bottom of ambition's totem pole. That tendency clung and made him vaguely dissatisfied, although he had an idea he now liked the job. It was boring sometimes, too lonely others, but it had a certain dignity. He could understand why kids dreamed of being a cop.

There was the weight of life and death in his hands. He had a gun. He was expected to use it if he must. That made him a little taller than the next Joe. He rattled the back doors, threw his flashlight on windows of business establishments, reached the next street and walked out onto the deserted sidewalk. The city looked different at this hour. It seemed cleaner and more inviting.

The sudden spurt of running feet made him turn around. A tall skinny youth was across the street, coming his way at a dead run. His feet flew with the abandon of someone who had to get out of the vicinity in a great hurry. He didn't see Alan.

"Stop him!" a man's voice yelled stridently. "Help, police . . . mugger! Help, police—stop that guy!"

A middle-aged man stumbled out of an alley waving his hands. His hat was gone, his hair was mussed, and his coat and shirt had been ripped open. The mugger was still moving at top speed, wholly unaware that his escape was over as fast as a bullet can travel.

Alan drew his service pistol. He knew how to shoot. That mugger was a made-to-order target, running under street lights, against the backdrop of a brick wall—running straight, with no idea of evasive tactics.

"Stop," Alan called out and blinked a little at the authority in his voice. "I'll shoot!"

"Get him," the victim yelled. "Stop him, Officer! Mugger! Mugger!"

Alan drew a bead. The runner's back was squarely in the sights of the gun. His finger began to squeeze one off. Slowly now—remember, this gun kicks. Slowly . . . and then his finger relaxed.

That running victim was just a kid. Maybe not more than fifteen. He was a mugger, sure. A criminal, without question, and a potential gangster. But if a bullet hit him in the back he wouldn't be a potential anything—he'd be permanently dead.

Alan lowered the gun. The victim was beside him now.

"Ain't you gonna shoot?" he asked anxiously.

"He's a kid," Alan said. "Fifteen, maybe not that. How much did he get?"

"Buck and a half."

"You want him to die for a dollar and a half?"

The victim shook his head. "I guess I was excited and mad. No, not a kid. Not nobody for a buck and a half—nobody! Say . . ." he peered at Alan's face. "I hope I

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never have to make a decision like that. Boy, not for me. No, sir, not for me."

Alan watched him walk away, pulling at his rumpled clothing. The area had settled down to the early morning quiet again. He knew where there was an outside phone booth and he went there as fast as he could.

He dialed, heard Rae's sleepy voice. "I'm okay," he said, "But I just found out I got a mind of my own. I've been making spot decisions all night. I just made another. We're getting married. I'm sober, baby. I'm in uniform! A cop can't drink when he's in uniform. I told you—I just found out I got a mind of my own. Yeah, sure I want to get married and I've never been so sure of anything in my life."

She said, "Neither have I," and her voice wasn't sleepy any more.

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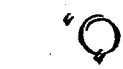

He Never Stooped To Conquer

How often have you heard a pompous Chairman get up and introduce a famous after-dinner speaker by saying something like "Our guest speaker is one who needs no introduction"—and then go on for twenty minutes praising the guest's accomplishments in vivid detail! Editorially speaking, we have been guilty of the same redundant procedure. When we brought you detective-crime short stories by such noted literary figures as Sinclair Lewis, Pearl S. Buck, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Edna St. Vincent Millay, W. Somerset Maugham—and so many other Nobel and Pulitzer prize winners—surely no introductions were necessary. But, like the peacocky Chairman, that didn't stop us!

And now, history repeating, we welcome the first appearance in EQMM of another world-famous author—no less a giant in contemporary literature than John P. Marquand. For here is a great "find"—a fascinating novelette of international intrigue, of spies and counterspies—indeed, a day-to-day, hour-to-hour, almost minute-to-minute account of the dangerous life of a professional secret agent on the trail of a modern spy ring; and it is written with the same perception, the deep understanding, the convincing realism of all Mr. Marquand's serious work—the never-to-be-forgotten THE LATE GEORGE APLEY *and such fine novels as* H. M. PULHAM, ESQ. *and* POINT OF NO RETURN.

"Life" magazine has called Mr. Marquand "the most successful novelist in the United States"—not only because his novels have consistently been outstanding best-sellers but also because so many discerning critics have agreed that Mr. Marquand is "a social novelist of great talent." And let us not forget that Mr. Marquand—reporter, advertising copy writer, and social satirist—is also the creator, in our field, of the celebrated Mr. Moto; in writing stories of crime, mystery, detection, and suspense, Mr. Marquand—to his everlasting credit—has never "stooped to conquer."

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GOODBYE, PICCADILLY

by JOHN P. MARQUAND

THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY doubt that Dr. Francis Barnwelder was going to take the London plane. Even after Dr. Barnwelder had checked his baggage and cleared his passport, Jim Briscoe had remained doubtful, because it was never wise to underestimate anyone on the Barnwelder level.

Jim Briscoe glanced across the passengers' waiting space at Idlewild airport. The small man in the dark coat was still standing near the barber shop reading his newspaper. It began now to look as though Jim would spend a quiet evening at home, since he might not need to follow Dr. Barnwelder. If Dr. Barnwelder had suspected he was being watched, he gave no sign of it; but then, why should he? There had beeen a routine check on him during all the years he had worked in secret installations, and no doubt anyone gradually became immune to personal attention.

If he had been Barnwelder, Jim Briscoe was thinking—granted that Barnwelder was the man he was almost sure he was—he would not have done anything so obvious as to take Flight 401. The man must have known it was very dangerous for him to go direct to London if things were the way Jim Briscoe believed. All he could think was that Dr. Barnwelder did not know how far the investigation had gone. If this was so, Jim Briscoe felt personally flattered, but it never paid to be too sure of anything.

He would not be alive today, he was thinking, if he had not learned never to indulge in overconfidence. There was a time in Rio, he recalled, when he had taken the precaution to brush clumsily against a room waiter only because he had not been overconfident; and owing to his sense of doubt he had learned, while there was still time to do something about it, that the waiter carried a knife. He would have been garroted in Singapore if he had not been impressed by the striking agility of the Arab who drove his taxi. It never paid to be too sure of anything just as it never paid to let your mind wander too long in reminiscence; but, even so, Jim Briscoe was finally growing certain that he and Dr. Barnwelder were about to cross the Atlantic together.

Of course, it was barely conceivable there might be trouble of some sort in Gander, yet this contingency might reasonably be discarded, since there were few places to go and a limited variety of things to do in Newfoundland.

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Perhaps, after all, Jim Briscoe thought, the most obvious course was the safest, and Dr. Barnwelder was blatantly indicating that he had nothing to conceal. Mrs. Barnwelder was accompanying him, a stout, kind-looking, middle-aged woman, and she really was Mrs. Barnwelder, because a check had been made, even down to her Swedish-immigrant grandparents in Minnesota. Men seldom looked for trouble when accompanied by their wives. If obviousness could be classed as an art, Dr. Barnwelder had managed very well. He was off to a meeting of the Learned Societies in Geneva, with no doubt whatever about the Learned Societies or the Barnwelder connection.

There had been a time, Jim Briscoe was thinking, when he had not believed in all this checking and paper passing; but after Delhi, in 1946, he realized how unexpectedly revelation could spring out of routine. Suddenly, if you kept checking, some detail did not ring true—like a foreigner's error in syntax—but there had not been any discrepancy in the dossier of Dr. Francis Barnwelder, B.S., Leland Stanford, 1920; M.S., University of Chicago; and Ph.D., Columbia.

After all, as someone in Washington had said some months before, what was there so funny about Barnwelder's being learned? The trouble was, as this individual in Washington had remarked, everyone was checking on everyone else since the nuclear scientist, Fuchs, had jumped the fence. Of course, the individual who had made these remarks has not been involved with the problem as long as Jim Briscoe.

At any rate, Dr. Barnwelder was close to being distractingly transparent. He had given his business and home address as Los Alamos, and now he was buying razor blades and toothpaste at the airport drug store while Mrs. Barnwelder sat waiting for him reading a copy of a large-circulation women's magazine.

It was possible, Jim Briscoe finally thought, that Dr. Barnwelder's carefree actions indicated that he had professional protection. But as Jim Briscoe examined the prospective passengers of Flight 401, he could discover no sign of a bodyguard, and he knew enough to be almost infallible at spotting the type, which was conventionally someone who would never be looked at twice. Also, the passengers had all been identified as thoroughly as time had permitted. There were a handful of businessmen and the rest were American tourists, most of whom were now in the cocktail lounge waiting for Flight 401 to be called. One of the attendants behind the British airline counter had picked up a hand microphone.

"Passengers for Flight Four-oh-one to London," he was saying,

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"will now board at Gate Four B. Have your clearance cards ready."

It was not advisable to display undue curiosity as the passengers gathered, carrying their overnight luggage, but Jim Briscoe watched them carefully while he appeared to be searching through his brief case for his gate card. Their faces had already been matched against the thousands of photographic faces with which he was familiar. As they moved toward Gate 4B, there was no eccentricity in anyone's walk and no indefinable aura that might awaken intuition. They were all honest travelers on straight errands, whose anticipatory excitement stamped them all as genuine.

Dr. Barnwelder also was very natural. He came hurrying out of the drug store, hastily thrusting his purchases into his brief case, a stoutish, round-faced man, with heavy lips and thick-lensed, rimless glasses, whose baldness showed at the back of his gray felt hat. His careless handling of his brief case looked almost as though he were trying to prove to anyone who might be watching that he carried no secret papers; but then, why should he?

Dr. Barnwelder was equipped to write down anything he wished to communicate in a series of equations that could reside in his brain tissue until the final minute of recording. For the purpose of communication he needed only another brain as competent as his. There would be no papers. All Dr. Barnwelder had to do was to communicate with an individual who according to word that had arrived that afternoon, had appeared unexpectedly in London. Jim Briscoe had been one of the few people who had predicted this appearance, which explained why he too was leaving on Flight 401.

Dr. Barnwelder had found his card, and now he passed through beside him. Jim Briscoe lingered a moment beside the airline counter.

"Are you all cleared, sir?" the clerk asked.

"Oh, yes, thanks," Jim Briscoe answered, "now that I've found my card."

The attendant was a very reliable young man, who, Jim Briscoe was beginning to believe, might possibly have a professional future—if he lived long enough. His question, according to previous agreement, meant that there had been no last-minute changes in the list.

"I see you've got me in seat thirty-six," Jim Briscoe said. "I hope you have me sitting next to some very pretty girl."

Jim Briscoe spoke loudly because it was time to be in character. He had used the same cover successfully several times before. He was using his own preparatory school and college. He was known as an ex-officer of the Marine Corps, and this detail was also true.

The name Briscoe was also his own, which made things easier;

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but also he had suddenly acquired independent means, with a bank account and securities to prove it, and he had also acquired an enthusiasm for medieval sculpture. There had been some talk, when the cover was being discussed, that he should be a well-to-do New Yorker trying to write, but this had seemed to him lacking in imagination. Besides, he had a good working knowledge of art.

"Yes, Mr. Briscoe," the airline clerk said, and for a second the mask dropped. "The prettiest girl on the flight, Mr. Briscoe, according to my judgment. Miss Edith Olmstead, from Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. She's a real pin-up girl."

"Flight Four-oh-one for London," the loudspeaker was calling, "is now loading at Gate Four B."

There was nothing to keep Jim Briscoe any longer. He remembered the name and notes. Miss Edith Olmstead was twenty-six years of age; height, five feet nine; weight, one hundred thirty; graduate of Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. She resided with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Olmstead, at 82 Frizell Street, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania and she was going abroad as a tourist. Mr. R. L. Olmstead was fifty-five years old; height, five feet ten and a half; weight, one eighty-six; Independent voter; and a partner in a real-estate-and-insurance firm. Jim Briscoe's mind had already gone back to special lists, but there had been no interest recently in any Olmstead.

Jim Briscoe had grown so accustomed in the last ten years to being two people at once that he was no longer very conscious of the effort. He was in his late thirties; height, six feet; weight, one seventy-five; complexion, fair; athletic and well-groomed. He was careful with his dress; and his speech was not markedly influenced by any section of the country.

His features were regular and his expression was amiable. Anyone seeing him in Europe always recognized him immediately as an American of good average background. He had a happy, anticipatory look as he climbed the steps to the plane, and he greeted the stewardess with a genial, warm interest that showed he was an eligible bachelor.

Dr. and Mrs. Barnwelder were sitting where he had directed, to his left, just across the aisle, five seats ahead—where he could check on them readily without their ever noticing him. Dr. Barnwelder was reading the evening paper, and Mrs. Barnwelder was still reading her magazine. Miss Edith Olmstead was already in the seat near the window and Jim Briscoe smiled at her.

"Good afternoon," he said. "I see we're crossing the ocean together."

Jim Briscoe had developed his own methods of evaluating and remembering faces. He had trained himself never to be distracted by

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superficial peculiarities, because he believed an observer's attention should first be concentrated on bone structure. Jim Briscoe had observed that Miss Olmstead's forehead was broad and high, her eyes were hazel-gray, large and well separated, her cheek- and jawbones were photogenic, her teeth were even, that she had a small mole on her right cheek, and that the wave in the light brown hair above her forehead was natural. He had made mental notes of all these facts before he realized that Miss Olmstead was a very pretty girl.

Grades of beauty had only a minor bearing in Jim Briscoe's profession, but he discovered himself mentally admitting, when he seated himself beside Miss Olmstead and put his brief case securely beneath his seat, that beauty had very little to do with measurements or symmetry. Beauty, in the end, he supposed, was a matter of spirit and emotional adjustment. Miss Olmstead's mouth was too large and her nose too short for academic perfection, but there was a freshness and vigor about her, and an impression of high spirits and generosity that threatened to make one forget identifiable detail.

She had taken off her white gloves, which now lay in her lap neatly folded over a black leather handbag, which she must have purchased especially for the trip, judging by its newness—a roomy, competent bag, large enough to carry bills, a change purse, lipstick, a compact, passport, other papers, and possibly a small automatic.

This last idea came to him involuntarily, because he had no reason in the world to suspect that Miss Olmstead might be armed. Her hands, which were also folded in her lap, though delicate and with nails decorated by an unusually red polish, struck him as being strong, like those of a sculptress or a laboratory technician. She wore no rings and showed no trace of a ring hastily removed. She did, however, wear a small gold bracelet on her left wrist, and the way it hung indicated that it was not hollow.

She was dressed in a smoke-gray traveling suit and a white blouse—silk, not nylon—which was fastened at the throat by a gold-and-diamond clip. The stones were small, which made Jim Briscoe conclude that they were genuine. It was undoubtedly a present for graduating from that college in Pennsylvania—Bucknell. He could not recall that any personalities under observation had been graduated from Bucknell University.

"Of course I hope you're right about our crossing the ocean," Miss Olmstead said, and she laughed. "I hope we do get all the way over."

Her voice did not sound like Philadelphia. Each of her words was as clear as a newly minted coin. For just a moment he had the impression that she sounded like a

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foreigner who had spent years of her childhood in a boarding school in England, but there was not the requisite self-consciousness. She might have studied dramatics at Bucknell, but she was not a professional actress. Her skin showed none of the corrosive effects of stage make-up.

Jim Briscoe laughed reassuringly.

"You sound as though this were your first trip abroad," he said.

"Oh, no," Miss Olmstead answered. "I used to go to school in Switzerland, but this is the first time I've ever flown. My parents have always been against flying."

The boarding school in Switzerland explained the voice.

"I think you'll find," he said, "that statistically this trip is a good deal safer than if you and I were motoring from New York to—"

He hesitated. He had almost said from New York to Washington, but he had checked himself in time. Once you mentioned Washington, people always asked if you were in Government. As he hesitated he saw that Miss Olmstead looked curious.

"From New York to where?" she asked.

"Well," Jim Briscoe said, "let's say from New York to Buffalo."

"Oh," she said, "do you live in Buffalo?"

"No," he said. "I'm just naming it as a convenient location."

"But you must know Buffalo," she said. "You must have been up that way quite recently if you've motored on the thru-way."

"That's true." he said. "I was up near Buffalo once this summer."

"Well," she said, "I'm glad you were, because I like putting two and two together." She raised her voice because the first of the port motors was turning over. "Please don't think I'm worried about planes. It's my father who's against them."

"Well," Jim Briscoe answered, "planes may have their drawbacks, but they get you from one place to another pretty fast."

"It's my brother who made him feel that way," she said. "He was a flier. He was killed in the war."

"Oh," Jim Briscoe said, and the starting motors were an adequate excuse for not saying anything more. He was listening to the motors as though he were personally responsibile for them. He glanced at his wrist watch.

"It looks as though we're starting out on time," Jim Briscoe said. "May I hold your bag for you while you fasten your seat belt?"

"Oh," she said. "Thank you. I forgot. I suppose it's just the same over the ocean as it is on land—I mean, seat belts at the take-off."

He wished that he could avoid balancing scraps of conversation. That remark of Miss Olmstead's about seat belts sounded unusually naive; but then she had not hesitated at all with her handbag. It

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seemed heavier than was necessary, that would indicate a heavy object. His instinctive precautions reminded Jim Briscoe of an old friend of his in Washington named Mr. Henry, who had quite recently retired from the Bureau.

Mr. Henry now lived in a small tapestry-brick house on Woodley Road, with his daughter, the widow of a naval commander. He was a plump, elderly man, with a thatch of white hair reminiscent of Mr. Carl Sandburg's and light-blue eyes that had what you might call a merry twinkle; and Mr. Henry's Cupid's-bow mouth wore an expression of amiability that Jim Briscoe had never seen it lose.

In spite of this jolly, though humdrum, exterior, Jim Briscoe had admired Mr. Henry from the very first moment they had met at the beginning of the war. Mr. Henry knew everything worth knowing about their subject. Instead of dying unexpectedly or developing digestive disturbances like some others high up in the agency, years of experience had mellowed him, and his remarkably broad understanding of people had finally developed into something that was a keen comprehension of human failings.

"If there is one thing we all must learn, Jim," Mr. Henry had said the last time Jim Briscoe had seen him, "it is not to be tense. Keep in mind the end result, and don't worry too much about the middle, except as regards women. Don't trust any of them when you're on a problem, particularly like the one on which you're working. Do you recall what Pope said?"

"Yes," Jim Briscoe had answered. "'Ev'ry woman is at heart a rake'—is that what you're thinking of?"

When Mr. Henry nodded, he looked like a teacher applauding the recitation of a favorite pupil, and Jim Briscoe could not help being flattered. Once, like other novices in the agency, Jim Briscoe had thought of Mr. Henry as being only another elderly authority on intelligence evaluation—until Mr. Henry had given him a lesson on strangulation with piano wire. Mr. Henry's technique had seemed considerably superior to that of an instructor at the secret installaion who had been taught in Burma and Tokyo.

Mr. Henry had sighed and lighted his pipe. While in the Bureau he had never allowed anyone under him to use tobacco except when necessary for cover purposes, because it slowed the reflexes and could not help but leave traces, and never under any circumstances to use a pipe.

"I do enjoy this," Mr. Henry said. "You must try a pipe, Jim, if the time ever comes when circumstances permit you. Personally, I have never greatly admired the ideas of any poet regarding women. The thing that makes any woman

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a problem in our work are her violent loyalties. Hers are much more emotional than those of the average man, with a more personal connotation. She can be loyal at any given time both to one man and to some other man's beliefs."

Mr. Henry tamped down the tobacco in his pipe and lighted it again, and Jim remembered his having said once that you could always tell a pipe smoker from the number of matches he left behind him.

"When you are in the field, always have the greatest reservation about any woman you may meet. No matter if you are sure you understand her, there's the danger of your mistaking her loyalty. I am still a believer in the adage that a woman's place is in the home."

"I check with everything you say," Jim Briscoe said.

The corners of Mr. Henry's mouth tilted downward, but he still gave the impression of smiling.

"Now, Jim," he said, "you must not be personally bitter. You see your boy now and then, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, every now and then," Jim Briscoe said. "Helen is always glad to have me see him."

"Well, he must be quite a little shaver by now," Mr. Henry said. "Let's see, ten years if he's a day, isn't he?"

"That's right," Jim Briscoe answered, "he's ten and quite a boy."

"Let's see," Mr. Henry said, "what is it that Helen's present husband does?"

"As a matter of fact, he's a dentist," Jim Briscoe said.

Mr. Henry laughed.

"Well," he said, "please forgive my little joke. His occuaption is more boring than yours is Jim."

Whatever reservations Jim Briscoe might have regarding the British, he had never lost his admiration for what one might call their flag-carrying capacities. There was no doubt the plane was British the moment they were aloft.

The flight steward in his monkey jacket, had developed a new, uncompromising cheerfulness, and the complexions of the two stewardesses looked fresher. The passengers were already passengers, to be tended and preserved with kindness; they weren't playmates, as they would have been on an American ship, any more than the stewardesses were hostesses.

The plane would level off at 18,000 feet, dinner would be served in one hour. The lounge bar would be opened in half an hour. In a very few minutes passengers would be free to move about; in the meanwhile they would receive instructions on what must be done in case of a forced landing on the water.

There was less jovialty about these instructions, less feverish effort to stave off reality, than there would have been on an American ship. The steward demonstrated

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briskly and accurately the fitting and inflation of a Mae West life jacket, and he took pains to point out the flashlight with which one might signal at night and the whistle that one could blow in the daytime in case one needed assistance. Jim Briscoe noticed that Miss Edith Olmstead gave the talk such undivided attention that he was sure she could not have heard it before.

"If we have to ditch—" she said. "That's what you say if a plane has to land on the ocean, isn't it?"

"Why, yes," Jim Briscoe answered, "that's one way of putting it."

"If we have to ditch," she said, "how long will the plane float?"

As far as he could tell from her voice, she was not apprehensive but only academically curious. In this respect, he was thinking, she was a typical American girl of her generation, so sure of herself that she was incapable of envisaging ugly possibilities.

"Not more than a minute or two," Jim Briscoe said, "and the chances are somewhere around half a minute, but don't let it spoil your trip."

Miss Olmstead laughed easily, and he was faintly surprised at the quality of her laughter.

"Oh, things like that don't worry me," she said. "I only like to know what's in front of me; I don't like things that are hidden. Do you feel that way?"

"Yes, I do," Jim Briscoe said. Their glances met, and he was impressed again by the wide intentness of her eyes.

"How do you know so much about planes?" she asked. "How long they float and things like that."

Jim Briscoe weighed what he was to answer quickly, because any long pause would have been suspicious.

"Oh," he said, "I've been in airplanes a lot since nineteen forty-one."

"Did you ever land on the water?"

"Yes," Jim Briscoe answered, "but it was the Pacific, nice warm water. I was in the Marines at the time."

She did not speak when he paused. She was a nice girl and she must have known that she was asking too many questions.

"You know, I should have introduced myself long ago," Jim Briscoe said. "My name's Briscoe, Jim Briscoe. I'm just going over to London for the ride."

"My name's Edith Olmstead," she answered. "Over for the ride too, but I hope to end up with some friends in Rome."

Jim Briscoe smiled, and his smile was completely genuine. "I wish I could see Rome this time," he said, "but it's going to be nice to look at London now that some of the austerity has worn off. Let's see, you didn't have a brother named Bill Olmstead back at Princeton in

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nineteen forty?" He knew very well there had been no Bill Olmstead at Princeton, but still it was a good question.

"No," she said, "that must be some other Olmstead."

"I used to see him on the freshman football squad at Princeton," Jim Briscoe said. "I've sort of lost touch with Bill."

"Do you know we have a very important person with us on the plane?" Miss Olmstead asked.

"Why, no," Jim Briscoe said. "Who is it? I didn't know we were carrying any VIPs."

"It's Dr. Francis Barnwelder, the atomic scientist," Miss Olmstead said. "He's that heavy-looking, bald-headed man, five seats up on the left."

"Is he really?" Jim Briscoe said. "How did you happen to find out?"

Her answer was so prompt that he could not doubt its genuineness.

"Why, everyone knows," she said. "All the passengers were talking about him. Didn't you hear them?"

"I was pretty busy," he said, before he could check himself.

"You didn't look busy," she said, and she laughed. It was a natural and friendly laugh. "You were just staring wishfully into the window of the drug store."

"Well, well," Jim Briscoe said, hoping his own laugh sounded as carefree. "I didn't see you hanging around the drug store."

"Of course you didn't," she said. "I was looking at you from the bar."

"Oh," he said, "the bar." Nothing could have been more natural than her explanation. It annoyed him that he had momentarily forgotten that the bar at Idlewild airport, with its plate-glass windows, was as public as a goldfish bowl and that it was as easy to look out through those windows as it was to look in. "Your mentioning it brings up an interesting association of ideas. How would it be if we went to the smoking lounge and tried to induce the steward to give us something, even if the half hour isn't up?"

"I'd love to go and try," she said "but I don't believe we'll get anywhere. The British are always so incorruptible."

This was another remark of hers that he thought, for a second, was unduly precocious; but then if she had gone to school in Switzerland, she had more than likely spent vacationtime in England.

"We can only try," he said, "and hope. Occasionally one of them does break down."

In fact, the bar steward did break down, and there was every reason he should. His name was Jameson, and the C.I.D., at the request of the Foreign Office, had assigned him especially for the trip.

Once they were in the smoking lounge, Jim Briscoe felt entirely at ease. The first minutes of breaking

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into an acquaintance with either a man or woman were always difficult, but now he could relax and allow himself to appreciate the charm of Miss Olmstead. It was most agreeable to discover that she cared as much as he did for early Gothic architecture, especially the eccentricities of its ornamental sculpture as exemplified by the gargoyles of Notre Dame and Chartres.

It was true that he had a moment's fear that he might not like her when she said that she simply adored Chartres. In his previous experience women who said they adored Chartres knew nothing whatever about that great cathedral, but it was different with Miss Olmsead. As they talked, he wished for a few stabbing seconds that he was not always dealing with uncertainties. Could it be possible, he thought, that she knew that he specialized in Gothic architecture and that she had taken some intensive lessons in order to appear agreeable to him? Such a possibility was worth considering. Yet as far as Jim Briscoe could tell, Miss Olmstead's enthusiasm was genuine, with a depth derived from much more than superficial reading. He was pleased when she expressed admiration at the extent of his knowledge, although he was habitually careful to discount flattery.

"I never dreamed you'd know so much about this," she said.

Jim Briscoe smiled and offered her a cigarette. He was carrying a handsome gold cigarette case inscribed with his name as a winner of a squash-racquets tournament in 1946. He had never won such a tournament, but small mementos always helped cover.

"I don't feel very flattered that you should be surprised," he said. "Why shouldn't I know a little about medieval sculpture?"

"Oh, no reason," she answered, "except that you look more like the outdoor, athletic type, someone who wins prizes like your cigarette case."

"Oh, that," Jim Briscoe said. "I shouldn't have brought it along except that people very seldom notice the inscription."

"It's a bad habit of mine," she said. "I'm always noticing small, useless details."

"I wouldn't blame myself for that if I were you," Jim Briscoe said. "It can be a useful habit sometimes."

"I wish I'd never found it so," she said. "Everybody only thinks of me as being inquisitive—just the way I am about you now. For instance, I'm terribly anxious to know when you first saw a gargoyle."

There was no doubt at all that Miss Olmstead was a very pretty girl with a genuine and lively sense of humor. It was a real delight to watch her eyes narrow when she smiled. Her lips were conventionally red, but with very little lipstick,

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or else it was not the kind that came off on a cigarete and not the kind that stained her teeth when she laughed.

There was a little powder on her nose, but only a very little. He was thinking that her complexion was very clear, with a sort of Old World clarity. All at once she reminded him of a White Russian girl whom he had met once in Shanghai, who had had that same kind of complexion—delicate, pink and white, slightly reminiscent of a shepherdess done in French porcelain. Miss Olmstead had been to school in Switzerland, had lived for at least a few years in that clear, neutral atmosphere, and was doubtless an enthusiast at winter sports. He could draw a mental picture of her on skis, poised and beautiful. He could see her smiling on a mountaintop, full of the joy of living, anticipating the breathlessness of swift descent.

"I'm not embarrassed by your question about gargoyles," he said. "I first saw one when I was about eight years old." His mind worked smoothly, and the artificial past under which he traveled became almost genuine to him. "It happened I was residing with my parents at Great Neck, Long Island, and I saw a picture in a school geography —the one of the lad brooding over Paris from the roof of Notre Dame. He must have appealed to my emotions rather than my reason, because I couldn't get his face out of my mind, and I never have been able to since. I am still fascinated by the mental climate that made people think up gargoyles."

"Would you like to have lived then rather than now?" she asked.

"Oh no," he said. "I don't really think so. Would you?"

"Things might have been simpler in some ways," she said. "But I'd rather be living now. I don't want to miss any of the show. By the way, why don't we have another drink?"

"That's a very good idea," Jim Briscoe said, and he waved to the bar steward. "Two double whiskeys, please."

Alcohol always demanded deep thought in his profession and kept cropping up as the unknown quantity in almost any problem. Aside from those questions of knockout drops and shifted glasses, which, though tiresome, were subtler than most amateurs realized, there was always the question of how much to drink and of what one's tolerance to alcohol might be at any given moment.

Was it ever worth attempting to get someone tipsy? On the whole he doubted it. Yet, on the other hand, he often thought of Sorgi, in Japan, for whose memory he had an inordinate respect. Sorgi had never refused a drink—or two or three or four, and this was surely one of the reasons why he had so long escaped suspicion. It was dangerous to refuse a drink, and even

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more dangerous not to finish if you accepted one.

"Doubles?" Miss Olmstead said.

"It was only a whim of mine," Jim Briscoe answered. "You don't have to take all of yours if you don't don't want it."

"What else is there to do?" she asked. "Besides, I always like to finish what I start. I suppose we'll be having dinner soon."

Jim Briscoe glanced at his wrist watch and saw that Miss Olmstead was looking at it too. It was a durable, practical time-piece, made of stainless steel and fastened on his wrist with an extra-heavy pigskin strap.

"Yes," he said, "they'll feed us before we get to Gander."

He was trying to estimate the amount of daylight there might be left at Gander. Being summer at that latitude, it would not be dusk till nearly ten o'clock, and he preferred daylight, under the circumstances.

"You must do a lot of hunting and fishing and things like that when you're not thinking about gargoyles."

In that moment's abstraction he had almost forgotten Miss Olmstead.

"Well, well," he said, "what makes you say that?"

"You've an outdoor type of watch with a Swiss movement," she said, "and I happen to know it's quite expensive, because my father has one like it."

He should have known far better than to have worn the watch, but then Miss Olmstead had given him an interesting piece of information. Watches like his seldom cropped up in real-estate-and-insurance circles.

A minute later the passengers were told that dinner was being served. In the second that he waited for Miss Olmstead to reach her chair by the window, Jim Briscoe was able to examine his brief case, which he had left so carelessly beneath his seat. It had not been touched. He could not tell whether he was glad or sorry—but then it was a very obvious business, monkeying with anyone's brief-case.

Miss Olmstead had the gift of knowing when to talk and when to be quiet. As soon as dinner was over, she took from her overnight bag a pocket edition of *The Portrait of a Lady,* by Henry James, and put on a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles. She was a girl who was able to make glasses seem not so much like a necessary help to eyesight as an interesting accessory that adorned her personality.

Jim Briscoe, in turn, opened his overnight bag and took out a copy of Plato's *Republic.* If one's room were searched, it was hard to believe that there could be anything deeply sinister about anyone who read Plato; and almost the same, now that he came to think of it, might be said of Henry James.

With a trained observation it was

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impossible not to learn a good deal about the character of a stranger over a period of hours. Yet, in the end, the sum of all conclusions amounted only to something you might term personality, and personality often defied exact analysis.

The more he saw of Miss Olmstead, the more interested he became in her, in a purely professional way. He could detect no guile about her, none of that confidence in personal charm that marked many women he had encountered professionally. On the contrary, her naturalness was what appealed to him, and her lack of hesitation.

He could see that he and she were much alike, in that they both had an acute enjoyment of the present; but the motives for his enjoyment, he was sure, were quite different from hers. Disillusion and suspicion had never touched her, and perhaps never would. She enjoyed the present primarily because she was happy and because she loved life.

She was happy when she put away her book and said that she was going to take a nap for a while, that she had been up quite late the previous night with farewell parties. There must have been several men who were in love with her and who must have been sorry to have her make the trip alone.

She looked happy when she was asleep, which was rare according to Jim Briscoe's experience, because one's guard dropped with sleep, and if anyone was as happy as Miss Olmstead, she had nothing to conceal. Her lips wore the trace of a half smile, and she only seemed to be waiting to be awake again. When they were a few minutes away from Gander, he touched her arm softly, and she passed immediately from sleep to wakefulness without the least confusion.

He was very glad that Miss Olmstead was not with him when someone took a shot at him at Gander, but then, perhaps, her presence would have averted it.

It was after the passengers had had coffee at Gander, he remembered, that he had grown tired of the large waiting room. In fact, the room had always made him nervous, since, like all other airport lounges, it was one of the most unstable places in the world. People who passed through it did so without interest and with no desire to remain, and most of them wished never to see the place again and possibly never would. Comfortable chairs with airfoam cushions, snack bars, real bars, and posters illustrating distant and exotic spots did little or nothing to alleviate this feeling of temporariness.

"Would you like to go outside?" he said to Miss Olmstead. "I think we could get permission, and it's the last chance we'll have to walk on the North American continent for a while."

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"If it's all the same to you," she said, "I'd rather sit on the North American continent right here. I wish you'd put on an overcoat."

"Oh, no," he said, "it isn't as cold as that. Watch it for me, will you?" And he left his overcoat on the chair beside her.

"Come back soon," she said, "and tell me if you see an Eskimo or anything."

When they had arrived at Gander it had been windy; now the wind was dropping with the sun. The sun, he remembered, was setting behind a massive bank of gray and purple clouds, and in spite of the activity of that huge airport the cold remoteness of northern North America closed around the area, and nothing had changed the wilderness around it.

He knew the place rather well, and consequently he strolled rather aimlessly past some of the hangars, trying to remember how Gander had looked when he had seen it first, in wartime.

Of course he should have remembered his old lesson of never being too confident of anything, but then perhaps he had not entirely forgotten. Some planes were warming up in front of the hangars, and there would be no need for a silencer, he was thinking, on any gun at Gander. Living as he had, it was only natural that he should have developed an acute sense of apprehension. He had just come to the corner of a Nissen hut behind one of the hangars when he was aware that someone was behind him.

He was so certain of what was going to happen that he reached instinctively beneath his tweed jacket before he recalled that he had put his gun in his val-pack because he did not believe in being armed aboard a plane. His right hand was still beneath his jacket as he turned to see a man behind him, dressed in a mechanic's coveralls.

The light was too dim to reveal much of his features. What was important was that he held a gun and obviously had been bracing himself to shoot, at the very instant that Jim Briscoe's reaching for a weapon must have been disturbing.

At any rate, even a good shot is apt to snatch at the trigger when started. It was a miss, and Jim Briscoe's mind was working by that time. First, he let his right hand drop to his side, and then he let his knees buckle until he was on all fours and still sinking toward the ground.

He doubted there would be a second shot if he gave the impression of being hit, and his line of thinking was right. The man stood for a second, watching him, and then he pocketed his pistol and ran.

Jim Briscoe was on his feet the same instant, sprinting in the opposite direction. It had been highly foolish of him to have left the waiting room, and he returned as rap-

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idly as possible. Miss Olmstead must have been watching the door, because she waved at him as he entered.

"I'm awfully glad you're back," she said.

"So am I," Jim Briscoe told her. "Delighted."

"There wasn't much to see out there anyway, was there?" she asked.

The plane, with its transatlantic load of fuel, was so sluggish on the take-off that he sighed with relief when they were over the water. He was thinking that Miss Olmstead was fortunate not to know the difficulties of leaving the ground.

"It must be nice to have friends in a place like Gander," she said. "I mean, people who let you in and out of the waiting room. It must help to break the journey."

Jim Briscoe laughed easily.

"I saw a good deal of the Air Transport Command in the war," he said. "A few of the old crowd are still around at Gander."

"Was the man you were talking with at the door one of the old crowd?" she asked. "I mean when you came back from your walk?"

Jim Briscoe turned toward her slowly. "Oh, yes," he said, "I met him out in the Pacific. It's funny, if you keep running all over the place, the way you do in a war, how many people you get to know rather well for a day or two, and then you forget all about them."

"He seemed very interested in what you were saying," Miss Olmstead said.

"Well," Jim Briscoe told her, "you can't help being interested when you catch up with someone, and now I'm going to make a suggestion."

He took a small vial from his vest pocket and shook two yellow capsules from it.

"I always find on these trips that you feel better in the morning if you take some sort of sedative. They won't do you any harm; would you like one?"

"Oh, dear," she said, "I wanted to find out more about you, and now you want to make me go to sleep."

"It's for your own good," Jim Briscoe said, "and besides, I hope you'll let me see you in London.

"You never can tell what people are like when they stop traveling," she said. "I don't know what you'll be like in London." She hesitated for a second and then took one of the capsules. "But I suppose it is a good idea."

It was a good idea, because there were several problems that he wanted to think through before he reached London. Nevertheless, he talked to her for another forty minutes, until she said she was really feeling sleepy. Then he called the stewardess, who gave her a pillow and a blanket. The bright lights had been turned down, and most of the passengers were asleep al-

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ready, but a few were still reading. Mrs. Barnwelder was asleep, but Dr. Barnwelder was reading.

When Jim Briscoe rose and walked down the aisle to the washroom, he stumbled, and steadied himself by putting his hand on Dr. Barnwelder's shoulder. There was no doubt that Dr. Barnwelder was not high-strung. There was no galvanic tensing of the muscles, no guilty start, no irascibility or annoyance. Dr. Barnwelder simply looked up from his book, amiably, through his rimless spectacles.

"I beg your pardon, sir," Jim Briscoe said.

"It is quite all right," Dr. Barnwelder answered, "quite all right."

His voice was low and Midwestern, and it sounded more agreeable than it had on the recordings to which Jim Briscoe had listened.

"I never can seem to get my air legs," Jim Briscoe said.

A few minutes later Jim Briscoe walked to the bar compartment, and Jameson, the steward, smiled at him.

"Nightcap, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, thanks," Jim Briscoe said. "I'd appreciate it."

They were alone, and their voices did not rise above the drumming of the motors. There was no reason why he should not be seen exchanging a few words with the bar steward.

"No news from Gander, sir," Jameson said.

"All right," Jim Briscoe answered. "I'm glad he was a nervous shot."

Miss Olmstead, he was glad to observe, was sound asleep. He wished he could be as far removed as she from the problems with which he was coping. There had been a time when he had been delighted with the life he was now leading. As his former wife was no doubt glad to tell anyone, he had not been the sort of person who liked to settle down, and excitements of various kinds had added to his restlessness—but in the end, perhaps enough is always too much.

As of the present, at least, he had had enough of uncertainty, enough of danger, and enough of intellectual puzzles. This did not mean that his nerves were on edge. He was only weary of not being like other people. If there was only some way of taking a few months off, everything might have balanced with everything else, but now he was too much of a professional ever to be an amateur again.

The synchronized sound of the motors formed a reassuring background for Miss Olmstead's sleep. There would never be a better opportunity to go through her handbag and overnight case. He liked to think that what stopped him was not his conscience but his reason. In reviewing everything he had learned about Miss Olmstead, he could find nothing sinister and no

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quality of doubt that could counterbalance the trouble that would arise if some passenger should see him going through her purse—a remote contingency but still a possibility.

He adjusted his seat to a more comfortable angle and closed his eyes. His idea of lurching against Dr. Barnwelder, though obvious, had not been a bad one. Dr. Barnwelder's heavy build had proved that he was certainly the Barnwelder who had played left guard for Leland Stanford in the years just following World War I.

It was strange how an idea could sometimes start almost out of nothing. The whole Barnwelder investigation had actually sprung from nothing more than a nickname, and then only because Jim Briscoe had developed a long memory. On one dull afternoon about a year before, he had been going through transcripts of tapped telephone conversations, on an errand that had nothing to do with Barnwelder or espionage. There was nothing duller than accurately transcribed human conversation and, because of its prolixity and constant repetition, nothing harder on which to concentrate attention. Yet it was repetition that first aroused his attention.

Just when he was wishing that wire tapping could be prohibited, not only as legal evidence but as an investigating device, a word obtruded itself on his attention. The word was "Jumbo," and there was nothing surprising about it when taken by itself. In any sort of underground apparatus, active individuals immediately took the precaution of losing their identities under cover names, and the name Jumbo made as much sense as any of them.

The many references to the thoughts and desires of Jumbo in these tapped conversations indicated that Jumbo was a person of some importance, if Jumbo was the code word for an individual and not a group. It was not Jim Briscoe's task that paricular afternoon to break any code. It was only when he was back in his apartment off Dupont Circle, standing under his shower, that he remembered another fact. A year ago he had glanced over the album of a college senior class and under a photograph of a thick-set young man he now recalled that he had read the nickname Jumbo.

It was strange how eccentrically one's mind could travel. It was not until the next morning that he finally remembered the real name of the subject in the class album. It was Dr. Barnwelder, then at Los Alamos, who had been referred to the organization for a routine security check. Of course, there was no reason why Jumbo Barnwelder should be the Jumbo in those tapped wire messages. It was all a shot in the dark, which had taken some time to prove. In fact, even now, the returns were not all in.

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Five seats and to the left, Jumbo Barnwelder was sound asleep. There was nothing so unpredictable as a scientist. You could never tell what sort of body would produce a magic brain. To look at him, Jumbo Barnwelder looked very stupid, and in some ways perhaps he was.

Jim Briscoe wished that circumstances permitted him to tap Dr. Barnwelder on the shoulder and to offer him a friendly drink. There were a number of things he would have liked to tell Dr. Barnwelder, and Dr. Barnwelder might have been grateful if he could have heard them.

He would like to have told Dr. Barnwelder, for instance, that nothing was going to happen to him, because he was very valuable in many different ways. There was no such thing, he would like to have told Dr. Barnwelder, as complete security in the realms of science and invention. The theory of nuclear fission and the general principles of electronics could not be veiled in secrecy. When any new device was made for peace or war and was distributed in many hands, in a short while it became public. All one could do was establish a certain amount of delay, and this delay was best gained by guarding as few secrets as possible, and these mostly in the category of future plans. There was no secret Dr. Barnwelder knew that was immediately vital. If Dr. Barnwelder could only be apprised of this, how much easier everything would have been for everybody.

If Jim Briscoe could only have said, in a friendly way, "Listen, Jumbo, we don't care a bit about any of the things you are going to tell. If we did, you wouldn't be crossing the Atlantic now. We don't care very much about your loyalty check-up. We've got your number, Jumbo, but we want you back safe and sound and comfortable. All we want to know is with whom you are going to get into communication when you get to London. Is it a Russian named Bjor, who goes under the cover name Max Blenheim? Is Jumbo going to meet Max? That's all we want to know, and if you would only tell, it would save a lot of trouble. We'll be delighted to have you tell anything you want to Bjor. All we want to know is, Do you and Bjor link together?"

It was too bad that the thing should be difficult. The main problem at the present time was to disturb absolutely nothing. Instead of breaking up a spy ring, it was far more valuable to know all about it and let it be. Things had gone so far that the Barnwelder meeting would bring everything into focus, because the Barnwelder meeting would confirm a whole chain of theories.

There was nothing, as Jim Briscoe's old chief used to say, so useful as a well-established, confident spy

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ring, every link of which one knew. You could feed and deceive a spy ring if you knew the links. If Jumbo met Bjor, this one led into very high echelons. At home it touched the executive personnel of at least two government departments, and in England it extended to the Foreign Office.

It was exasperating to think how delicate the balance was and how quickly a single wrong move would destroy the whole machine. On the one hand, those involved could not have known how far the investigation had gone—or Dr. Barnwelder would never have been flying the ocean. On the other hand, they knew that something was stirring or a .32 caliber bullet would not have whizzed by Jim Briscoe's ear at Gander. It was a safe guess, from the sound, that it was a .32 and not a .45.

They must have understood the risks they had taken with that shot at Gander. In one way Jim was deeply sorry for this, and in another way relieved. The shot meant recognition, and if one became too widely known, one's usefulness in the field was very nearly over. The present problem, however, was what he would do when he reached London. Obviously, he could show no interest whatever in Dr. Barnwelder.

Fortunately, this contingency had been reviewed in Washington on the grounds one had to be prepared for all contingencies. Fortunately too, there was another cover for Jim Briscoe. If he was suspected, as he obviously had been, he had another mission, with the papers all prepared. It was amazing how efficient some people were in Washington—sometimes.

Jim Briscoe lifted his brief case from beneath his feet and opened it with cautious fussiness. Then he looked around him suspiciously, to alert anyone who might be watching him. Finally he produced a razor blade, split the heavy leather cover of the brief case, and pulled out two sheets of folded flimsy paper, which he thrust self-consciously into his breast pocket.

He replaced the brief case beneath his seat and after a few minutes pulled the papers from his coat. They were headed *Most Secret* and contained suggestions for a revised liaison between certain British and American intelligence divisions.

Jim Briscoe read the papers for half an hour and then returned them to their place in the slip side of the brief case and fussed with the edge of the leather to conceal the opening. Feeling that he had done all he could under the circumstances, he then took a sleeping pill.

The stewardess awakened him when the plane was letting down for Shannon. He shook his head, yawned, and reached for his brief case. Someone had been at the edge of it. Someone had read the *Most Secret* papers.

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Jim Briscoe was very much relieved.

A great weight was lifted from Jim Briscoe when the plane taxied to a stop at London Airport. He felt as he remembered feeling as a boy, at home in the attic on a rainy day, standing dry and safe and listening to the rain beat on the roof.

It was wonderful to know that the papers had been read; it was unfortunate, of course, that he had not spotted who had read them, but one could not do everything. Already he had a feeling of being safer than he had been for many hours. The pressure was gone, and he no longer had the sensation of being watched. From now on his British opposite numbers would take over the problem of Dr. Barnwelder.

As he waited with his fellow travelers while the passenger list was examined, he found himself guessing who had been at the brief case. Sometimes one had a hunch about such things, but his reappraisal of the passengers told him nothing. Everyone was glad to be off the plane, and conversation had the cheerful quality of a farewell dinner on shipboard. Miss Olmstead was like an old friend now that the flight was over. She seemed to have accepted him completely during the last few hours.

"I've never met many Princeton men," she told him. "Princetonians never seemed to be much interested in girls from Bucknell."

It was wonderful not to have to listen with strained attention any longer. The British were taking over. He could see his opposite number, Mark Cheltman, at the passport control. Good old Mark, he was thinking. Though Mark looked thin and almost anemic, he was an almost perfect street fighter, as Jim Briscoe had once learned in New Delhi.

"I was crazy to go to Bryn Mawr after school in Switzerland," Miss Olmstead was saying, "but father said Bryn Mawr was based on unreal values."

"Doctor and Mrs. Barnwelder, please," they called from passport control.

He watched Dr. Barnwelder move toward the counter. He thought his step was brisker and more youthful than it had been at Idlewild, and Dr. Barnwelder did not seem to be having as much trouble with his brief case and his overnight satchel. Jim Briscoe had a thought that the relief he experienced was being shared by Dr. Barnwelder.

Jim Briscoe turned to Miss Olmstead. It occurred to him, as things had developed, that he would have much more time on his hands than he had expected. In fact, except for a daily call at a building in the vicinity of Piccadilly, there would be nothing for him to do except be the amiable playboy he represented. He could only wait on the side lines now until the Barnwelder

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matter resolved itself. The British were carrying the ball.

"I don't know how well you know London," he said to the girl, "but if I can be of any help to you, please let me know. I've been around here a good deal myself, and you can always find me at Claridges. If you have nothing better to do, I could take you out to dinner, and we might do a little night clubbing."

"I'd love to," Miss Olmstead said. "It's awfully kind of you. I've only been in London for a day or two with Father on the way to Switzerland. What about tonight? I'm staying at the Savoy."

"Good," Jim Briscoe said. "We might dine at the Caprice. Suppose I call for you at eight."

They called his name, and he held out his hand. Her handclasp was firm and strong. Their eyes met for a minute, and they both smiled. He wondered who in Bryn Mawr had told her about the Savoy, or if it was where she had stayed on her way to school in Switzerland. The clip with the small diamonds did not wholly check with the Savoy.

In the last ten years Jim Briscoe, like nearly everyone in his organization, had worked very closely with the British. On the whole the *rapprochement* had been rewarding. Yet he was never quite sure that he understood his opposite numbers, because there was a difference of approach and cleavages of viewpoint that became apparent when you least expected them.

There was a complacency about the British that was exasperating sometimes. They knew that they had the best intelligence service in the world. They might not have all the newfangled gadgets of the Americans—the cameras, the business-machine filing systems, the electronic devices, and all that sort of thing—but they had the best intelligence service in the world.

Jim Briscoe had always found them kind, cordial, and patient. He was enormously pleased on the few occasions when he found that he was right and they were wrong. He was secretly highly gratified when Sir Godfrey himself, who was the head of the division and who was sometimes facetiously called Sir God by the younger men, once told him that he had promise and ability.

"Of course, my dear boy," Sir Godfrey had said, "like all your countrymen you are lacking in sound training and discipline, and you have that cocksure conceit of all you Americans. Still, you are willing to learn. In fact, had you been born British, you might very well have been one of us—given time."

In the last few years Jim Briscoe had developed a warm affection for Sir Godfrey's book-lined offices off Piccadilly. The rugs were worn, but the furniture was solid, indestructible Victorian. Except for

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broken glass and a few fallen ceilings, the place had carried on well through the blitz. The elevator, as usual, was out of order.

"It's been out of order for the last eight months," Mark Cheltman said. "No spare parts, you know, because of its antiquity. Besides, Sir God says that stair climbing is good for wind and limb. I say, you *are* in good condition, aren't you?"

"I can still run just as fast as we did up those stairs in Damascus," Jim Briscoe said, "and that was really running."

"Yes," Mark said, "that was a good show, but one needn't run so fast right now, need one?"

Sir Godfrey was in his office, and the whole thing closely resembled Agatha Christie, but then Agatha Christie had doubtless seen many places like Sir Godfrey's office. Sir Godfrey was wearing striped trousers and a brown tweed jacket. A bowler hat and a lead-headed cane hung on the hatrack behind his desk. He was thin like Mark Cheltman; his close-clipped mustache was gray, and so was his carefully combed hair. He still had the posture of a former Sandhurst man. He had been hit in the leg at Vimy Ridge in World War I, but his limp was hardly noticeable as he walked around the desk and shook hands with Jim Briscoe.

"What is it you are carrying wrapped up in paper?" Sir Godfrey asked.

"It's my brief case, sir," Jim Briscoe said. "I think it ought to be tested for fingerprints."

"Indeed," Sir Godfrey said. "Mark, give it to Hawkins. You've no fellow in Washington as good as our Hawkins, Briscoe. That's a well-cut suit of yours, by the way, but arrogantly American."

"I'm glad you noticed it, sir," Jim Briscoe said. "It's meant to be that way. You see, for this trip I'm playboy Briscoe, spending my dollars at Claridges."

"Scarcely any disguise needed for that, eh?' Sir Godfrey said. "Gad, if I could only be fifty again and be there with you at Claridges. Did you have a pleasant crossing?"

"It wasn't so bad, sir," Jim Briscoe said, "but there was what you would call a bit of a flap at Gander. I was telling Mark about it, and he thought we'd better take it up with you."

"Well, sit down," Sir Godfrey said, "and let me fill my pipe." Unlike Mr. Henry back in Washington, Sir Godfrey believed in pipe smoking.

Jim Briscoe was so familiar with the technique of making a concise but accurate verbal report that he was able, while he was speaking, to admire the care with which Sir Godfrey followed every word. You could see everything in his mind come together as he listened. He smoked for fully half a minute after Jim Briscoe had finished, but his silence was not embarrassing.

"A pity, isn't it, that they spotted

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you," Sir Godfrey said, "but they do have some rather clever chaps. I gather, don't you, that you were fingered, as you Americans love to put it, by someone on the plane and not by telephone from the States or anything of that sort?"

"Yes, sir," Jim Briscoe answered. "I believe that's the way it was."

"Yet you were not aware of anything out of line?" Sir Godfrey said.

"Not until the last few seconds," Jim Briscoe said, "and then it was instinctive."

"Instinct does save lives," Sir Godfrey said. "That bit about the brief case was rather good, but it was a pity that you were asleep when the play for it was made."

"I was afraid it wouldn't be touched," Jim Briscoe said, "if I hadn't been honestly asleep. There's nothing easier to spot than someone faking sleep."

Sir Godfrey looked slightly annoyed.

"I know," he said, "I know. I only say it is a pity. But whoever the chap was, he managed things very neatly."

"Yes, sir," Jim Briscoe said.

Sir Godfrey nodded and their eyes met.

"A very artistic job, what? I know of only one school, aside from a little place of our own, where such work is taught so carefully."

"You mean Moscow, sir?" Jim Briscoe said.

Sir Godfrey smiled and nodded.

"That Slavic mind—whoever did it was not a one-term student. But you didn't see anyone Slavic on the plane?"

"No, sir," Jim Briscoe said, "and the passengers were screened before we left. But we'd better ask them to check in Washington."

"Yes," Sir Godfrey said, "send word will you Cheltman? Well, here comes Hawkins again."

All the fingerprint experts whom Jim Briscoe had ever known developed similar mannerisms as they rose to the top of their profession. They were all neat, fussy, and studious, and when they talked, they often made small gestures as though they were running through a card index. The light from the dusty windows behind Sir Godfrey's desk shone on the heavy lenses of Mr. Hawkins' spectacles. He was holding Jim Briscoe's brief case deferentially, and when he spoke he had a slight difficulty with his h's.

"No prints on the case, Sir Godfrey," he said, "except where Mr. Briscoe held it by the handle."

Sir Godfrey set down his pipe and placed his fingertips together.

"Could you advance the opinion, Hawkins," he asked, "whether or not gloves were worn?"

"Not gloves, I think, Sir Godfrey," Hawkins answered. "In my opinion the brief case was wiped with a cotton hand towel. I came across several cotton fibers."

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"What I thought," Sir Godfrey said, "the washroom. Mark, spring to action, please, and find out from Jameson and the rest which passenger, if any, entered the washroom with a brief case during the flight from Gander."

"Mr. Briscoe inquired while he was still air-borne," Mark Cheltman said. "No one was seen carrying a brief case into the washroom, but I'm afraid the concentration was on Barnwelder and not the washroom, Sir Godfrey."

"Oh, dear me," Sir Godfrey said. "Let me give a word of advice to you young men. Never, never, neglect a washroom. It is always a key position. Think of the material that has been flushed down toilets!"

Jim Briscoe and Mark Cheltman both nodded gravely, and Jim Briscoe blamed himself for not having cautioned Jameson. But then Jameson had not been entirely under his orders.

"The papers inside the cover," Sir Godfrey said. "I trust they were properly prepared, Briscoe?"

For the first time in the interview Jim Briscoe felt a twinge of annoyance.

"When they were inserted, Sir Godfrey," he said, "the papers had only my prints of course."

"There was another print on the papers besides Mr. Briscoe's," Hawkins said, "In very bad condition, and partially effaced."

Sir Godfrey picked up his pipe and relighted it.

"You see," he said, "no gloves. I have always maintained that gloves are clumsy. Well, who was it, Hawkins? Barnwelder?"

"No, sir," Hawkins answered, "it's nowhere in our files."

"Dear me," Sir Godfrey said. "Would you care to venture a guess whether it was a man's or a woman's?"

"There's too little left for any conclusion, Sir Godfrey," Hawkins said.

"I suppose so," Sir Godfrey answered. "Well, thank you, and send a wirephoto to Washington at once, won't you Hawkins?"

After Hawkins was gone and the door was closed, Sir Godfrey drummed his fingers softly on the desk.

"I think on the whole it was a good show, Briscoe," he said. "Where do you suggest we go from here?"

"Well, sir," Jim Briscoe said, "it looks as though they might be reassured, but your people will have to carry the ball from now on in, Sir Godfrey."

There was another silence, and Sir Godfrey looked worried.

"Barnwelder's being covered, of course," he said, "but this chap he may get in contact with, that's the difficulty."

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow you, sir," Jim Briscoe said.

Sir Godfrey sighed.

"I gather the reason we are all here," he said, "is because you peo-

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ple in Washington have a feeling that the man traveling under the name Max Blenheim is a Russian scientist named Bjor."

"Yes," Jim Briscoe said, "and I'm sure you follow our line of reasoning, sir. If Barnwelder is delivering information, obviously the only person capable of understanding it would be Bjor."

Sir Godfrey nodded and sighed again. "Naturally, we have quite a bit in the files about the fellow," he said. "He seems to be most retiring. They never put him into the game except at a big moment, do they? I understand that Bjor has been pointed out to you and that you can recognize him."

"Yes, sir," Jim Briscoe said. "I have seen him and I admit he is rather inconspicuous. He was pointed out to me at Dumbarton Oaks when there was more sweetness and light than at present."

"Dear me, Dumbarton Oaks," Sir Godfrey said. "And you think you could recognize him still?"

"I don't forget people like Bjor," Jim Briscoe told him.

"Oh, dear me," Sir Godfrey said. "I wish he hadn't been so retiring, because you're the only one who can spot him as far as I know."

"Why, there's Hall right in your office, Sir Godfrey," Jim Briscoe said. "Hall knows him better than I do. Hall saw Bjor when he was at Geneva two years ago."

"Yes," Sir Godfrey said, "that's just it."

He paused, seemingly waiting for Jim Briscoe to ask his meaning, but Jim Briscoe had gathered what the difficulty was from watching Sir Godfrey's expression.

"You see, Hall, poor chap, isn't here now," Sir Godfrey said. "He disappeared last week. He was going to meet me here for tea. He never came—no word, no sign."

"They got him, did they?" Jim Briscoe said.

"I fear so," Sir Godfrey answered. "Alive too, I suspect. Frankly, I've been somewhat worried about Hall's time reactions. They were too slow for a man his age. I'm very much afraid they will make him talk."

Jim Briscoe nodded. It was ridiculous to think anyone could remain silent under certain circumstances.

"Poor Hall," Sir Godfrey said. "There's only one consolation; I'm almost certain that he never knew you knew Bjor, and Dumbarton Oaks lies in another era. I suppose we ought to face the future. We'll cover Barnwelder, but when he comes in contact with someone we think is Bjor, you'll have to be with us to make the identification."

"You'd better save me until the last moment, then," Jim Briscoe said. "The chief wanted me to say especially that we are counting on not upsetting their apparatus."

"Oh, quite," Sir Godfrey said. "And now, since poor Hall isn't with us, how about a spot of tea?"

(continued on page 99)

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **MARGARET SCHERF**

TITLE: ***The Man Who Liked Roquefort***

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALE: New York City

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *The eternal triangle—can age wither or custom stale its infinite variety? In this case, there were Aunt Caroline and Uncle William and William's mistress*—money

I MET AUNT CAROLINE FOR LUNCH AT Schrafft's. She had phoned me early that morning to say she must see me, that she had something dreadful to tell me.

"Now, what have you done?" I asked, as soon as we were seated. "Or would you like a martini before you tell me?"

"I don't think I'd better, Gerald," she said, but I could see the idea appealed, so I ordered her one. Uncle William considers all forms of alcohol a wicked waste—now that his ulcers make it impossible for him to imbibe.

Aunt Caroline at 55 still has a lot of fun in her, in spite of Uncle William's efforts to stamp it out. I am her only living relative, and I feel responsible for her, as I love her dearly and she seems so helpless.

Uncle William has a chemical business. Among other things he manufactures exterminators, and he was now in Chicago on a promotion trip. He had been gone a full month, and the luxury of independence was perched on Aunt Caroline's head in the shape of a little straw hat with ribbons and feathers. It made her shabby suit look more out of fashion, and her gloves, darned in the thumbs, more threadbare.

"I don't see that buying a new hat is such a crime," I told her, thinking she ought to have a whole new wardrobe.

"It isn't the hat, dear." The martini came, and she took a bracing sip. "You know Ellen Reed?"

Of course I knew Ellen. She and Aunt Caroline had been as close as

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burrs since boarding school, and Ellen had helped more than anyone to preserve Aunt Caroline's sweet nature against the acid of Uncle William. He hated Ellen, and despised poor Jim Reed, who couldn't make money but insisted on enjoying life without it, stretching his meagre salary to include such outrageous extravagances as books, which anybody could get free at the public library.

"Ellen didn't ask me—I don't want you to think that for a moment, dear." My aunt's blue eyes were earnest, pleading.

"Didn't ask you what?"

She took a nervous survey of the crowded room, as if she feared William might be there, listening. Then the story came out. Aunt Caroline had been to see Dr. Pratt for some minor ailment, and he had told her Ellen needed an operation, but refused to have it. Dr. Pratt was gravely concerned. Would Caroline try to persuade her? The trouble was, of course, that Jim Reed didn't have the necessary cash, and Ellen hadn't wanted to admit that to Dr. Pratt.

"I finally got it out of her," Aunt Caroline said sadly. "Then I talked to Dr. Pratt and he was awfully decent about it—he'll perform the operation for a nominal fee, but the hospital bill will come to five hundred. So I wrote out a check."

I couldn't believe it. I regarded her with stunned admiration. "You've really done it this time. Where did you get the five hundred?"

"William put it in my account before he left—in case of emergency, he said." Her hand shook as she set down her empty glass.

"I think you'd better have another martini." I waved to a waitress and considered Aunt Caroline's mutiny, and Uncle William's probable reaction. Of course, he had not expected her to touch that five hundred for anything short of his own death. Watching her dear, kind face under the absurd little hat, I felt more than my usual hatred for Uncle William, more pity for her, more rebellion at the thought that she was now terribly frightened, and with good cause. He would make her suffer—and he was very clever at devising tortures.

"How much is Uncle William worth?" I demanded.

"I don't know, Gerald." She was surprised. "John told me last week that somebody had made an offer of a million dollars for the business, but William refused it. I think John was a little disappointed, poor dear."

John had also been rather fun-loving, I recollected, when he first came into Uncle William's organization; but he soon fell in with the idea that all profits must go back into the business. Meek and hard-working and even-tempered, he was the ideal partner for Uncle William. He had put capital into the company, and so had Aunt Caroline. So far as I knew, she had never even had any interest on her investment.

"Why don't you leave him?" I

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demanded. "Sue him for alimony, and take your money out of the business to boot."

"Oh, Gerald." She smiled at me as if I were proposing the most fantastic nonsense, and I suppose I was, William would part with alimony as easily as governments give up bureaus. And anyway, Aunt Caroline hadn't the fiber even to begin that sort of fight. I grumbled that with a business that size, she ought to have a decent allowance, at least.

"It is a wonderful business, but of course there's so much competition," she reminded me. "You know that little man who comes round once a month and says, 'Pardon me, madam, have you seen anything?' He was around today and I said I thought I had a mouse, and Gerald, do you know he was using somebody else's product? I told him right away he ought to be using our things, but he said he liked the one he had with him. It's called Tempto, and he says it tastes like Roquefort."

"Roquefort!"

"For the better class of East Side Mouse," she explained, twinkling for a moment. "I told John about it. I think he should know what other companies are doing, don't you?"

"What does Tempto do to the unfortunate little beasts?"

"Internal hemorrhage. That nice little man who ran the flower shop next the chicken-parts place near 52nd Street died that way. A ruptured ulcer, his wife told me."

I looked at my watch. We had a client coming in from Philadelphia in the morning to look over a piece of property on our listings, and I wanted to have all the data for him. "When is Uncle William due back? There's no immediate danger, is there?"

"Tomorrow," she said miserably. "Grand Central at 4:15."

"Why don't you meet him and get it over with right away?"

"I thought I'd tell him at dinner, dear. I'll have something he likes, so he'll be in a good mood. And, Gerald, will you come? He's always better when you're there. I've asked John too—his wife is at the shore."

I knew it would only bottle Uncle William's wrath for later use on her, but I promised to come.

During the afternoon, when I should have been working, I found myself thinking about Uncle William. He was a problem I had wrestled with for years, with no noticeable results. I always wound up thinking there was nothing you could do about Uncle William except take him by his skinny little throat and choke him till he gurgled. But this time I resolved to be more patient and practical. I would meet his train and try to persuade him to be lenient with my aunt. How I was going to do this I did not know, but I must do it.

The night was warm and heavy, and I tossed and turned, still grappling with the problem. I went over again, as I had so many times, the

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error of my great uncle Jasper when he arranged this marriage for his daughter Caroline. He adored Caroline, but considered her weak and financially an imbecile, and so he chose William, because William had no bad habits Jasper knew of, and was very ambitious. Uncle Jasper died only a few months after the wedding, and never knew what he had done to Caroline.

An alert night brings a dull morning, and I muffed the meeting with our client from the City of Brotherly Love, losing a nice little piece of change for the company and a tidy commission for myself. When I came perspiring down the steps from Vanderbilt Avenue into Grand Central at 4:10, I was in no state of mind for patient pleading. I reached the gate just as Uncle William came through it, carrying his brief case and looking as elegant as tailoring can make a man of five-feet-four.

"Well, Gerald, this is an unexpected pleasure," he said, addressing me as usual as if I had played hooky from kindergarten to meet him. "Has something happened?"

"I want to talk to you. Will you come into the Commodore for a few minutes?"

He didn't want to, but I insisted. We sat at the bar and he had milk and kept looking at his watch.

I didn't give my speeches as I had planned them at all. I had always had trouble talking to Uncle William—ever since the day I came to New York from Des Moines, a young kid ready to take the world by the tail, and he told me I ought to go back home and help my father in the sheet metal business.

But today I was resolved not to lose my temper—it was too important to Aunt Caroline. I stated, firmly and without emotion, that as my aunt had had a considerable investment in his company for some fifteen years, it was not precipitate or unreasonable to inquire as to when she might expect some return on her money. If that was not forthcoming, then I thought she ought to take her money out and invest it elsewhere.

He didn't answer me immediately, taking several swallows of milk, and then he asked the bartender for crackers—whole wheat crackers. Finally he turned to me with an air of sorrow. "I know this will be sad news for you, Gerald," he said. "Your aunt has evidently never told you."

"Told me what?"

"She withdrew her money several years ago, and invested it, against my advice, in some utterly worthless oil stocks."

"Is that right?" I said. I knew he was lying as well as I knew my own name. I fished a dime from my pocket, and said, "Wait for me. I have to phone a friend."

When I came back from my short conversation with Aunt Caroline, he was gone. She had never withdrawn a cent of her money, of

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course not, Gerald, what gave you such an idea? I concluded Uncle William had no intention either of returning her investment or paying any dividends on it.

It was now 4:40. I had an hour to make two purchases. The first item I found, without trouble, in a delicatessen. The second I could not obtain, and I confess I felt a shameful relief. This lets me out, I thought. I am a peaceful fellow, and not unusually brave. Then I recalled the plate under Aunt Caroline's sink. It might be there still. And in that case I would be obliged to use it. My relief vanished.

At ten minutes of six I walked up Lexington Avenue and into 54th Street. I was in a cold drizzle of perspiration, though the night was as hot as the hinges. In my right hand I carried a small paper bag and as I passed a policeman I felt that his eye was on it, although its contents were quite innocent.

I began slowly to climb the two flights of dark stairs to their apartment, once the back parlor of a brownstone house. Uncle William never brought any of his business acquaintances here, and the place was plenty good enough for two plain people, he said. It had fifteen foot ceilings, maroon woodwork, a bathtub stained a pale coffee color in which you could always pick up loose bits of tile and plaster fallen from the wall. The small, narrow bedroom had a deep dark closet full of Uncle Willim's made-to-order suits.

He had rented the place furnished when they were married, and when Caroline ventured to suggest furniture of their own, he said it was just a temporary roost and no use putting a lot of money into it. He had gone into a week's mourning when she bought a second-hand metal cabinet for storing canned goods. Since it had to be bolted to the wall, they could never take it with them.

When I came in, puffing, John was already there and Uncle William was entertaining him by going over a few sheets of figures.

"Smoking too much, Gerald," he greeted me. "I can take those stairs without an extra breath." No reference to his disappearance from the Commodore.

John gave me a friendly wink, and pretended great interest in the pearls of wisdom William was dropping.

Aunt Caroline was in the tiny kitchen, juggling her battered pans on the three-burner gas stove. The floor, as always, was almost covered by paper bags and cartons—anything she might be using—and for a moment I thought there was no Tempto under the sink. Then I saw the small Havilland plate with half a dozen whole wheat crackers arranged enticingly on it.

She saw me looking at it, and said, "That's for the mouse." As if I didn't know.

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I put my paper bag in the ancient refrigerator. "I brought Uncle William some Roquefort," I told her.

We all sat down at the wobbly gate-legged table and Uncle William entertained us with stories of the condition of his ulcer and the marvelous food he had found in a Chicago cafeteria for almost nothing.

"I'm sure it couldn't come up to this." John gave my aunt a warm smile. "You've got the best cook in the city."

"Thank you," William said, as if it were his doing.

I could see Aunt Caroline screwing up her courage, and all at once she came out with it, in a lump. "William, there was a sort of emergency while you were away, and I had to write a check for five hundred dollars."

He turned the whites of his eyes on her, and his hand stopped in the act of reaching for a muffin. "What was that?" he demanded.

I tried to help her. "Ellen needs an operation—it's a question of life or death. Aunt Caroline, as any decent human being would do, came to her aid with the necessary funds."

We all three sat very still, waiting for the explosion. There was none. A slow, dreadful smile came over his face and William said, "Well, now, it won't be hard to correct a little mistake like that. Just tell Ellen that you were momentarily carried away."

Caroline's eyes were large and imploring. "You mean, ask for it back?"

"Of course, dear. She'll understand."

Caroline tried hard to stand up to him. "But I thought if it were my own money I was using for Ellen—"

"Your money?"

"The money I had from father, to put into the business."

"Now dear, you can't have forgotten that you asked me to invest all that money in oil stocks, not one of which is worth the paper it's written on. I told you at the time I thought it was unwise—"

"I don't remember any such thing, William."

She surprised him a little, I thought. He wasn't accustomed to any back talk. But he had worked out things since I talked to him that afternoon. "John, is there anything on our books to show that Caroline has an interest in the business?"

John had a troubled look. "I don't think I understand," he said.

"There's nothing to understand. Caroline is under the impression she has money in the business, when such is simply not the case!"

John admitted, with a worried frown, that there was nothing on the company books to show she had an interest. Uncle William had her money firmly on his side of the ledger. How he had managed I didn't know, but I was certain that a man who had built a million dollar business from scratch would know how to arrange a thing like that so

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it would be pretty difficult to uncover.

William shoved his plate away. "Let's not sit at table all night. You have some dessert, I suppose, Caroline?"

"Oh, yes," she said. "Both the boys brought Roquefort for you. Wasn't that sweet of them?"

"No. They know it's not on my diet."

"But you are very fond of it," she reminded him.

"I'll eat it. I hate waste." He glared at Caroline. "And there's nothing more wasteful than throwing away money on extravagant fools like Ellen who depend on other people to pull them out of a hole."

I got up quickly and told Aunt Caroline I would clear the table and bring in the crackers and cheese. She wouldn't have it. There wasn't room for two in the kitchen and she alone knew where things were. I hovered in the doorway, but she said, "Gerald, dear, you're in the way. Do go and sit down."

So I took refuge behind the evening newspaper.

Aunt Caroline could be heard tearing the top on a cracker box, and William called to her. "You're not opening a fresh box of crackers?"

"Yes, William, the others are damp. You know how the weather gets into crackers, dear."

"Waste, sinful waste," he muttered, helping himself to the Roquefort, and wrinkling his nose as if he foresaw a night of indigestion. The rest of us had no appetite for cheese.

I offered to help Caroline with the dishes, but she said she would do them in the morning.

The buzzer sounded. I opened the door and found Jim Reed, with a large brindle Boxer on a leash.

"Hello, Gerald," he said, glad to see me, and then, catching sight of William, he didn't look glad at all, but he came on in. "Just going by, and thought I'd stop to tell you Ellen's due to enter the hospital on Friday. I don't know how to thank you, Caroline. We simply couldn't swing it without your help."

"Have you used Caroline's check?" Uncle William asked.

"I've got it right here in my wallet," Jim said, patting his breast pocket. "Safe and sound."

"Very foolish to carry a check that size around with you," William observed. "However, this may save you some embarrassment."

Jim looked at him. "Embarrassment?" he repeated.

"If you give it to me, I won't have to stop payment, will I?"

I couldn't bear to watch Jim's face. He looked gray, and damaged, somehow, as if his nerves had been pulled out. I got up with my coffee cup and went to the kitchen. The dog followed me and sniffed the Tempto crackers under the sink. I snatched the plate from the floor and just for safety dumped the crackers into the nearly empty old

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cracker box which Caroline had jammed into a big paper sack of refuse.

"William doesn't mean it, Jim," Aunt Caroline said bravely.

"We regard it as a loan," Jim said. "We'll pay you back just as fast as we possibly can."

"The place to borrow money is a bank," William told him. "That's what banks are for."

Jim put his hand in his pocket, took out the wallet, and gave William the check. Then he picked up the dog's dragging leash and went out.

"Pay us back indeed," William mocked. "Jim Reed never saved a nickel in his life. But he can afford to keep a dog. Not a small dog, not a modest dog that doesn't eat too much, but a great big animal that probably eats as much as two men!"

"The dog," Aunt Caroline said, as if it didn't matter but still she wanted to keep things straight, "is not Jim's. They're keeping it for a friend."

John, looking miserable, said he thought he'd better be on his way. I left with him.

"Poor Caroline," he sighed, as we came into the street. He was too reserved to say more.

I went home to my apartment, feeling depressed and disappointed.

It was still dark when my phone rang.

"Gerald?" Aunt Caroline sounded distraught.

"What's wrong, dear?"

"William is terribly sick. Dr. Pratt is here. Could you possibly come over—right away?"

I came on the double—or as much the double as a person can come in a Manhattan taxi.

Dr. Pratt took me aside. "He can't make it," he told me in a low dry voice. "Ruptured ulcer."

I went into the bedroom, and found Uncle William just as I had always longed to see him, his five-feet-four inches of crafty meanness lying inert, his color that of an oyster in a no-R month.

John arrived shortly after, and wrote down William's gasping last instructions. Then the words stopped and he was gone.

I understood now why Aunt Caroline had wanted me out of the kitchen. She was remarkably calm and steady for a woman who had just done away with her husband, and I admired the old girl's courage.

I took care of most of the arrangements for my aunt, and we were busy for the next few days. It was during the long ride to the cemetery on Long Island that she finally brought herself to tell me what was in her mind.

"It was very good of you, Gerald," she said. "Foolish, but very kind, and I do appreciate it. But I'm worried. You're not practiced in this sort of thing. Are you sure you haven't left any loose ends?"

I swallowed my astonishment.

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Better not to tell her that I had not used exterminator—either Tempto or William's own product—on my uncle. If I did, she would conclude it was John who had brought her this blessed relief. Safer for her to think it was her dear Gerald—nothing could induce her to mention that belief to another soul.

As we all stood around Uncle William's grave, I looked at John with a new respect. The Roquefort he had brought to dinner must have done the work. We walked back to the cars, and he took my arm. "Gerald," he said in a low earnest voice, "you can trust me absolutely, and I'm more grateful than I can say. If there's ever any way I can repay you . . ."

Again I controlled my astonishment. If I denied that I had earned his gratitude, he would attribute his good fortune to Aunt Caroline. So I nodded gravely, and said goodbye.

The cause of my uncle's departure remained obscure, and continued to trouble me. I tried to persuade myself that it had been a natural death—after all, people did die of ruptured ulcers. But when I was with Aunt Caroline I could not help feeling a certain uncomfortable doubt. Our talk, which had always been so free and frank, now lacked its old sparkle. There was a constraint between us, and I was not sure it was all on my side. And when I saw John, there was the same uneasiness in the air. I longed to know the truth, and yet I was afraid to know it.

One evening in early October I was having dinner with my aunt in her new apartment on West Sixty-Third Street.

"Isn't it lovely?" she said, looking around at the beautiful things she had bought. "Sometimes I feel guilty about it."

"Guilty?" I repeated warily.

"Poor William. He couldn't help his little habits. You know, Gerald, he was himself right up to the moment he died."

"What do you mean by that?"

"After it was all over, and I finally got around to washing those dinner dishes, I looked around for something to put the coffee grounds in—to keep the garbage bag from getting too wet, you know. I picked up that old box of crackers that William thought he ought to finish before we opened a new box, and and you know, Gerald, the box was empty! He ate all those stale crackers, just to save them. Poor William."

"Poor William," I added thankfully. "He hated waste."

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DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

Herewith the second in our revived and revitalized Department of "First Stories"—an engaging tale of a long day's honest work in that city of danger and intrigue, Naples . . .

The author is in his late twenties and has already packed in a "typical writer's" background of varied activity: graduate of Stanford University in 1952 with a B.A. in journalism; cryptographer in the U.S. Army, serving in Naples; two years of wandering after his honorable discharge, working ski resorts in the West in the winter, Lake Tahoe gambling joints in the summer; then, in rapid succession, janitor, waiter, bellhop, ski instructor, shill for blackjack tables—knocking around in Idaho, California, Colorado, Nevada, and Mexico; more recently, an advertising copy writer, and most recently, a free lance fiction writer, with rejection slips hitting a total of no less than 80 before EQMM purchased his first story to make the long, hard, and heartbreaking grade . . .

Good luck to you, Mr. Rubin—you have had diversified and colorful experiences—now use them as story material!

A GIFT FOR ANTONIETTA

by RICK RUBIN

HERE IT IS THE VERY GNAWED OUT end of the month, thinks Amadeo Corazone, leaning against a lamppost and staring out at the Bay of Naples. Just before payday, everyone broke, and hardly a single rich tourist in sight. All Naples a city of paupers, and nowhere for a poor fellow to turn an honest profit.

Amadeo pities himself. Twenty-five years of age and still forced to make his living catch-as-catch-can on the streets, living by his good looks and his wits. He pities himself for having to allow his mistress Antonietta to support him, and having to take her backtalk along with her lire. He pities himself his frayed suit, his tattered shirt, his battered shoes, his lack of a hat. Poor Amadeo Corazone. He's almost ready to look for a steady job, some despicable and menial work as a porter or an elevator operator. But . . .

But a little American tourist lady gets a crisp new 5000 lire note, on top of a pile of other notes, when she changes a Traveler's Cheque at the Banco di Napoli. The other bills are frayed and tattered, but the

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fiver seems almost too bright and new to spend. It's about twice the size of an American dollar bill, and folded, it will fit comfortably in one half of the tourist lady's new Florentine leather pocketbook. He does some calculating, figuring 625 lire to the dollar, and comes up with a value of exactly $8.

If the bill weren't so new, so unfolded, Amadeo might not have noticed it as the little American tourist lady comes out of the bank, blinking in the brilliant Neapolitan sunlight.

But Amadeo does see it, and immediately decides it must be his. Among other things, there is the matter of Antonietta. A man supported by a woman finds the woman hard to dominate. But give her a little gift, and even though she's still supporting you she thinks of you as her lord and master. So thinks Amadeo Corazone as he decides that Antonietta must receive a pair of nylons, or some earrings, directly after Amadeo lays his hands on that crisp new 5000 lire bill.

"Ah, dear lady," Amadeo croons, "There is a little thing I must speak to you. Will you please to listen a moment to me?"

The American lady eyes him suspiciously, narrowing her pale-blue eyes. But in a second she decides that he is a harmless fellow, this young Italian man with the broad shoulders and the little boy's shock of dark brown hair hanging over his brow. Such intense black eyes he has! And how polite he is!

"My family, it is fallen on hard times," Amadeo laments to her. "It is the cruel war." He refers to a war fourteen years over and almost forgotten, completed while Amadeo was still a lad in short pants.

"Poor fellow," says the tourist lady, scenting fallen aristocracy.

"Hard times," he continues. "To make the living we are reduced to selling the priceless family heirlooms. The lace, the jewelry, even this cameo of my sainted grandmother."

Here he pulls out a packet of tattered tissue, and unwrapping it, shows the tourist lady a cameo brooch—a cheap, mass-produced cameo brooch worth no more than a few hundred lire.

"Note the beautiful hand carving," Amadeo whispers enticingly. "A remarkable likeness of my sainted grandmother. She was a leader of the society of all Napoli in her day."

The tourist lady sees the remarkable likeness. Her breath quickens.

"Yet hard times force me to sell it in order to buy food for the members of my once proud family. I can expect no more than 5000 lire for it, only a tiny part of its value."

"Only 5000 lire?" A hint of avarice is heard in the lady's voice, visible in the form of an invisible black buzzard crouching on her shoulder—but visible to so perceptive a fellow as Amadeo.

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"Ah, perhaps with a little luck I can get more. Perhaps I can find someone so sentimentally disposed as to give me eight or ten thousand lire," sighs Amadeo.

"A genuine heirloom, you say?"

"Many times over, dear lady. Worth more than you can imagine."

She actually begins to reach. Amadeo sees her hand dart into her purse and withdraw a thick wad of paper money, the exquisite fiver on top.

Then in a swoop comes that pork-of-the-morning Giorgio, that swine who preys on the poor visitors, fat and greasy in his fake uniform, with his fake solicitious attitude! A pox on such thieves as he! Spoiling Amadeo's perfectly honest sale. For after all, isn't Amadeo selling the lady something from which she will get more than her money's worth in pleasure? What if she *could* buy the same cameo in any shop for 250 lire? Would the American tourist lady enjoy such a trinket a fraction as much as this priceless "heirloom" from a nearly royal family?

Giorgio swoops like a pig with wings and all Amadeo can do is stand by, cursing softly under his breath.

"Modom," Giorgio shouts, "You must beware of these scurvy street vendors. And beware, Modom, of the counterfeit bills. In Italy they are the great danger. Myself, a custom's Inspector, permit me to inspect your money—to guard you against the counterfeiter!"

"Oh!" says the lady, stunned by the rapidity of Giorgio's onslaught.

Giorgio, that flying pig, already has the money out of her hand, the whole bundle, before she can recover herself. He succeeds in detaching the bright new bill that Amadeo needs so badly for Antonietta's present. He holds it up to his eye, checking it with zeal.

The lady recovers her tongue and demands her money back. It cannot be counterfeit, she states, for she has just received it in the marble-walled Bank of Naples.

Giorgio apologizes most profusely. "Had I but known you had just received it from that most reliable establishment," he says. "A thousand pardons, Modom."

But while he talks he switches a counterfeit bill for the glorious fiver, then hands the sheaf of bills back again to the lady and slips off into the shadows. That pork-of-the-morning!

"Now about that cameo," says the lady, offering Giorgio's worthless counterfeit 5000 lire note.

"A mere nothing," says Amadeo, trying to keep Giorgio in sight. "A trinket. Worth no more than a hundred lire. Excuse me please."

He dashes down the alley after Giorgio but slows down when he has him safely in sight. Giorgio is now a marked man. He, perhaps alone among all the citizens of Naples, surely and without question

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has money. But what can Amadeo do to get that money? What, short of breaking Giorgio's skull? Which Amadeo is capable of, both in anger and in strength, but which would be a most unwise action.

Perhaps then a little shakedown? A threat of exposure? Such a pig of a thief would undoubtedly be easy to scare. Yes, that is it—a threat of exposure to the police. Amadeo will modestly admit that he can be bought off with the fiver. And then Antonietta will have her little gift, and Amadeo will again be lord and master. Besides, it will be a good deed, thus to put the fear of God in the head of such a pork as Giorgio.

Amadeo quickens his pace, hurrying to overtake Giorgio. But before he can close in on him there is a flash of blue, and Pasquale, the neighborhood policeman, has pounced on the counterfeiter. Amadeo turns to flee, but thinks better of it and merely retires into a doorway. He listens carefully to what ensues.

"And how are you today, my dear Giorgio?" Pasquale demands in a voice not at all as cordial as his words.

"Ah, honored officer of the police, how fine to see you!"

"Absence perhaps makes the heart grow fond?"

"Has it been so long?"

"Altogether too long, my friend Giorgio."

"Ah, well, one is busy."

"Busy at your old tricks? I believe I saw you speaking but a moment ago to an American tourist lady."

"A matter of no consequence."

"A matter of exchanging bills, as I saw it."

"No, no, you must be mistaken."

"A matter of wearing a false uniform."

"Only for parades and celebrations. You know how I love parades and celebrations, Pasquale."

"I too, Giorgio. I too love to celebrate. Perhaps you would like to help me to celebrate?"

"Help you, friend police officer?"

"A small contribution—to buy a bottle or two and perhaps a bit of sauce for the pasta."

"Unfortunately, at the moment . . ."

"The usual size of contribution, Giorgio. Your regular monthly contribution."

Cursing softly, Giorgio passes Amadeo's fiver to Pasquale.

Amadeo curses softly too.

Now it is Pasquale who has a pocketful of money, but how is one to separate the money from a policeman? Antonietta's gift seems more distant than Capri across the bay. And she becomes every day more difficult to manage, stronger in the knowledge of how it is she who supports Amadeo.

Amadeo follows Pasquale on his rounds, at a respectful distance, racking his brain for a way to separate the policeman from the loot. The sun bakes his brain. He can-

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not think of even the smallest of strategies. Hitting an officer of the police is considered the worst of form.

Pasquale strolls about the streets, greeting thieving shopkeepers with a smile, patting small children's heads, and tipping his cap respectfully to women in the streets.

Amadeo follows in a fog of concentration.

Then, before the smidgen of an idea has occurred, the necessity of procuring an idea eliminates itself. Pasquale the pouncer is pounced on by Rosa, his luscious wife.

"Pasquale, Pasquale, give me some money for food. Give me some money for wine. Give me some money for clothes. Pasquale, give me, give me . . ."

The very same 5000 lire bill—now growing limp but undeniably the same fiver—passes from the policeman's thin hand to the soft white one of his wife Rosa.

And off down the street, jiggling happily, goes the good wife Rosa. And off down the street, his mind occupied with an entirely new train of thought, goes Amadeo.

What a long day it is becoming, Amadeo thinks. How hard it is for a poor man to make an honest living, surrounded as he is by thieves. What a pity that beating up a policeman's wife is no more acceptable than beating up an officer of the law. That would be so much easier than following her down back alleys and pummeling one's tired brain for some means of separating her from one's rightful property.

Might he offer himself to Rosa as a lover? Yes, surely that might be the way to recover his funds. She must need a handsome, virile young man like Amadeo, living as she does with the stern-faced Pasquale. Maybe he ought to rush up to her and offer his services.

But that would take a long time. He'd never have the fiver soon enough to buy Antonietta a gift today.

No, there must be some other way.

But where is Rosa leading him? Not home certainly. This isn't even the same neighborhood that Pasquale's house is in. Why, the shameless witch! So it's true what they say about her and Bernardo! Yes, right into the building she goes. Right up to Bernardo's apartment. The vulgar, shameless witch!

Amadeo parks himself at the bar across the street. He purchases an espresso and a sweet roll, and discovers that after paying the tab he hasn't a single lira left. And a long afternoon is stretching ahead. He sighs and leans on the bar. Who can tell where his fiver is now?

Rosa could tell, but Amadeo isn't prepared to ask her when she trips out of the apartment house three-quarters of an hour later, light of foot and merry of eye. But there's no need to ask. She orders a mineral water, which she drinks

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in a gulp, smacking her lips with relish, and then she dives into her purse for money. Looking into her billfold, Amadeo sees no fiver there.

The evil wench has given it to her lover! Without a doubt. The money she has wormed from her poor, hard-working husband given to that loafer and black marketeer, that sallow-faced, money-lending Bernardo.

Amadeo has dubious thoughts. Is that what his Antonietta will do when he marries her some day? When he becomes rich, or gets a steady job, heaven forbid, will she take the sweat of his brow to give it to some lover? Best he give her a good beating too, along with the gift. But first the gift. A beating without a gift and no telling what Antonietta may do. So back to the matter of the gift—or more properly, the separating of Bernardo from Amadeo's rightful fiver.

Now here's a dilemma. Bernardo is familiar with every subterfuge known to the citizens of Naples. In fact, he's used them all himself. A tough nut, this Bernardo. But Amadeo feels himself strong. He'll think of something, never fear.

By the time Bernardo descends from his apartment, natty in a light summer suit and a straw hat, Amadeo has his plan worked out. It is simplicity itself!

"Bernardo," he shouts, running up out of breath, as though from a heated dash clear across the city. "Rosa sent me to you to get the 5000 lire back. Pasquale suspects! He demands either to see the money or the groceries she was to buy. Quick, give it to me, and I'll run all the way and deliver it to her."

"Ha," Bernardo snorts. "Let the baggage suffer. A lot I care. I'm tired of her anyway. Away with you, Amadeo."

What can you do with a vicious sort like that? Knock him over the head and simply take the money? Not likely. Bernardo is of a numerous clan—a clan not shy of vendetta. Not the sort of fellow for a lone wolf like Amadeo to tangle with. Amadeo is reduced to stringing along behind, waiting his chance.

And it is getting late! Amadeo's hopes are falling. It is getting late in the afternoon and not even a hundred lire for dinner, let alone a pair of nylons or some earrings for Antonietta. Amadeo begins to feel queasy in his stomach.

What a city! Full of thieves, cheating wives, counterfeiters, bribed policemen, and every other sort of riff-raff. A poor fellow can't even begin to make a living here. For the hundredth time in the past few years Amadeo thinks of moving to the north. To Florence, or perhaps to Milan. Ah, there an honest Neapolitan can flourish, among the sweet-dispositioned, pure-hearted northerners.

What's this? Bernardo in earnest conversation with a skinny, bespectacled little American soldier? A

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soldier carrying a bag suspiciously shaped like cartons of cigarettes, and wearing the shoulder patch of Southern Headquarters of the NATO forces, in nearby Bagnoli. Ah, ha!

Bernardo peers into the sack. The soldier indicates the number six with the fingers of his two hands. Bernardo hands the soldier the fiver, plus a 1000 lire note. The soldier hands the paper sack to Bernardo.

Bernardo turns on his heels. The soldier saunters off down the avenue, Amadeo hot on his tail. Such a little fellow. Not at all like the giant Americans who look so fearsome. This one couldn't struggle out of a net of wet spaghetti. Or, for that matter, resist a big, healthy fellow like Amadeo, intent upon recapturing his rightful due.

And it will teach the skinny little soldier a lesson. Teach him not to deal with black marketeers and not to walk unescorted down perilous back streets in Naples, city of danger and intrigue. Really, by doing this, Amadeo will probably save the little fellow's life some day in the future.

But rounding a corner, the soldier goes into a bar and sits with another soldier. They jabber, and as Amadeo watches through the doorway the little soldier passes the fiver to his larger companion. They shake hands, down their drinks, and come out of the bar. They separate.

No chance of strong-arm tactics any more. The soldier who now has the money seems ten feet tall. He's a paragon of American soldier manhood! Broad as the Piazza Plebiscito. Tall as Vesuvius. Fierce-looking as the bad man in an American Western movie.

Well, there's always more than one way to make a lira.

"Hello, Joe," Amadeo says, sidling up to the giant. "You like a girl? A drink? I can fix it for you."

"Get lost, buddy," the giant says. "Anything I want I'll find for myself."

"Ah, but sarge, I can find better for you. No cost! I do it just to be a friend."

"Be a friend and shove off," the giant says, slapping Amadeo on the back with such heartiness that the Neopolitan almost spills to the pavement.

And again Amadeo finds himself hungrily trailing after a man who he knows without doubt possesses at least 5000 lire.

What a tragedy life is! The rich grow richer, the poor grow hungry. The poor are permitted only to look through the plate-glass window of life at the good things on display. Taunted, but never fed.

Amadeo walks, ponders, and waits. Who can tell when fate will give even the poorest of us a bit of luck? The lady of luck is fickle. Then fate does it! Into La Zebra Bar turns the oversized overstuffed, overstrong American. Am-

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adeo peeps cautiously through the door, walks quickly inside behind the soldier. Amadeo smiles as though he personally has carried the soldier many miles on his back, then directly into La Zebra.

The soldier heads for a table where a slim, dark-haired girl is sitting alone.

Amadeo swaggers to the bar.

"A vermouth with a touch of lemon, if you please," he demands of the bartender.

"And the money?"

"Taken care of. Rest assured, my friend, taken care of."

"What makes you so sure?"

"The soldier I just brought in."

"Ah, poor Amadeo, the sun has touched your head. It's the end of the month. The soldiers are all broke as little matchsticks."

"Not that soldier. Wait and see."

The soldier gulps a whiskey and soda as his eyes take in the exciting-looking girl. The black-haired girl smiles softly up at him.

The soldier puts his arms around the girl.

The girl cuddles against the soldier.

The soldier rests his head against the girl's inviting shoulder.

Suddenly the girl leaps up, slaps the soldier's face, and stalks off.

The soldier shouts his wrath but the bartender cuts him off, threatening to call the military police. He sends the soldier packing.

The soldier gone, the girl returns. She sits down beside Amadeo. She smiles dreamily.

"Give me the 5000 lire you took from the soldier's wallet, bebe," Amadeo says.

"Don't be silly—he had no money. It's the end of the month. The soldiers are broke as peasants."

"The fiver," Amadeo commands, snapping his fingers. "The rest you can keep for yourself."

The girl is mystified as to how he knows. "Why should you have it?" she demands. "I'm the one who got it."

"Didn't I lead the soldier in here? Didn't I send him directly to you, like a dove to a falcon? I've been following that fiver since early morning. It's mine."

Ruefully the girl reaches into her blouse and produces the fiver.

Ah, thinks Amadeo, now things are going to be all right. A long day's honest work—but success at the end!

Tomorrow he'll find a lovely gift for Antonietta, for that's the sort of generous, good-hearted fellow he is. Antonietta can't say he leeches off her, not after he gives her an expensive gift. And tonight—tonight he'll have a good supper and a drink or two. No need to throw away the whole fiver on a gift.

Amadeo pats the girl gently—with the contented air of a man who has worked hard, thought clearly, and rules his own roost with an iron hand.

"Thank you, Antonietta," he says.

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F. Scott Fitzgerald's first published work
(at the age of 13!)

Arthur Mizener, in his fine biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald titled THE FAR SIDE OF PARADISE *(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), wrote the following: "Meanwhile [in F. Scott Fitzgerald's 13th year] he had begun to write and become Saint Paul Academy's star debater (no one had found a means to shut him up). Having had to read Sir Walter Scott in school, he turned out a complicated story of knights and ladies called 'Elavo'; and having become an expert in the detective story [by his 13th year!] on his own initiative, he wrote 'The Mystery of the Raymond Mortgage.' This story was printed in 'Now and Then' in September 1909; it was his first published work. It is, for a schoolboy, a skillfully plotted little murder story and, in its sedulous imitation of the style of such works, often unconsciously very funny."*

So here is F. Scott Fitzgerald's first published work—and the only editorial changes we have made are the deletion of seven words and some changes in punctuation.

THE MYSTERY OF THE RAYMOND MORTGAGE

by F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

WHEN I FIRST SAW JOHN SYREL or the New York *Daily News,* he was standing before an open window of my house gazing out on the city. It was about six o'clock and the lights were just going on. All down Thirty-third Street was a long line of gaily illuminated buildings. He was not a tall man, but thanks to the erectness of his posture and the suppleness of his movement, it would take no athlete to tell that he was of fine build. He was twenty-three years old when I first saw him, and was already a reporter on the *News*. He was not a handsome man; his face was clean-shaven, and his chin showed him to be of strong character. His eyes and hair were brown.

As I entered the room he turned around slowly and addressed me in a slow, drawling tone: "I think I have the honor of speaking to Mr. Eagan, Chief of Police." I assented, and he went on: "My name is John Syrel and my business, to tell you frankly, is to learn all I can about

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the case of the Raymond mortgage."

I started to speak but he silenced me with a wave of his hand. "Though I belong to the staff of the *Daily News*," he continued, "I am not here as an agent of the paper."

"I am not here," I interrupted coldly, "to tell every newspaper reporter or adventurer about private affairs. James, show this man out."

Syrel turned without a word and I heard his steps echo up the driveway.

However, this was not destined to be the last time I ever saw Syrel, as events will show.

The morning after I first saw John Syrel, I proceeded to the scene of the crime to which he had alluded. On the train I picked up a newspaper and read the following account of the crime and theft:

EXTRA

Great Crime Committed in Suburbs of City

Mayor Proceeding to Scene of Crime

On the morning of July 1st a crime and serious theft were committed on the outskirts of the city. Miss Raymond was killed and the body of a servant was found outside of the house. Mr. Raymond of Santuka Lake was awakened on Tuesday morning by a scream and two revolver shots which proceeded from his wife's room. He tried to open the door but it would not open. He was almost certain the door was locked from the inside, when suddenly it swung open disclosing a room in frightful disorder. On the center of the floor was a revolver and on his wife's bed was a bloodstain in the shape of a hand. His wife was missing, but on a closer search he found his daughter under the bed, stone-dead. The window was broken in two places. Miss Raymond had a bullet wound on her body and her head was fearfully cut. The body of a servant was found outside with a bullet hole through his head. Mrs. Raymond has not been found.

The room was upset. The bureau drawers were out as if the murderer had been looking for something. Chief of Police Egan is on the scene of the crime, etc.

Just then the conductor called out "Santuka!" The train came to a stop, and getting out of the car I walked up to the house. On the porch I met Gregson, who was supposed to be the ablest detective in the force. He gave me a plan of the house which he said he would like to have me look at before we went in.

"The body of the servant," he said, "is that of John Standish. He has been with the family twelve years and was a perfectly honest man. He was only thirty-two years old."

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"The bullet which killed him was not found?" I asked.

"No," he answered, and then, "Well, you had better come and see for yourself. By the way, there was a fellow hanging around here who was trying to see the body. When I refused to let him in, he went around to where the servant was shot and I saw him go down on his knees on the grass and begin to search. A few minutes later he stood up and leaned against a tree. Then he came up to the house and asked to see the body again. I said he could if he would go away afterwards. He assented, and when he got inside the room he went down on his knees under the bed and hunted around. Then he went over to the window and examined the broken pane carefully. After that he declared himself satisfied and went down towards the hotel."

After I had examined the room to my satisfaction, I found that I might as well try to see through a millstone as to try to fathom this mystery. As I finished my investigation I met Gregson in the laboratory.

"I suppose you heard about the mortgage," said he, as we went down stairs. I answered in the negative, and he told me that a valuable mortgage had disappeared from the room in which Miss Raymond was killed. The night before, Mr. Raymond had placed the mortgage in a drawer and it had disappeared.

On my way to town that night I met Syrel again, and he bowed cordially to me. I began to feel ashamed of myself for sending him out of my house. As I went into the car the only vacant seat was next to him. I sat down and apologized for my rudeness of the day before. He took it lightly and, there being nothing to say, we sat in silence. At last I ventured a remark.

"What do you think of the case?"

"I don't think anything of it as yet. I haven't had time yet."

Nothing daunted, I began again. "Did you learn anything?"

Syrel dug his hand into his pocket and produced a bullet. I examined it.

"Where did you find it?" I asked.

"In the yard," he answered briefly.

At this I again relapsed into my seat. When we reached the city, night was coming on. My first day's investigation was not very successful.

My next day's investigation was no more successful than the first. My friend Syrel was not at home. The maid came into Mr. Raymond's room while I was there and gave notice that she was going to leave. "Mr. Raymond," she said, "there was queer noises outside my window last night. I'd like to stay, sir, but it grates on my nerves."

Beyond this nothing happened, and I came home worn out.

On the morning of the next day I was awakened by the maid who

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had a telegram in her hand. I opened it and found it was from Gregson. "Come at once," it said, "startling development."

I dressed hurriedly and took the first car to Santuka. When I reached the Santuka station, Gregson was waiting for me in a runabout. As soon as I got into the carriage Gregson told me what had happened.

"Someone was in the house last night. You know Mr. Raymond asked me to sleep there. Well, last night, about one, I began to be very thirsty. I went into the hall to get a drink from the faucet there, and as I was passing from my room (I sleep in Miss Raymond's room) into the hall I heard somebody in Mrs. Raymond's room. Wondering why Mr. Raymond was up at that time of night I went into the sitting-room to investigate. I opened the door to Mrs. Raymond's room. The body of Miss Raymond was lying on the sofa. A man was kneeling beside it. His face was away from me, but I could tell by his figure that he was not Mr. Raymond. As I looked he got up softly and I saw him open a bureau drawer. He took something out and put it into his pocket. As he turned around he saw me, and I saw that he was a young man. With a cry of rage he sprang at me, and having no weapon I retreated. He snatched up a heavy Indian club and swung it over my head. I gave a cry which must have alarmed the house, for I knew nothing more till I saw Mr. Raymond bending over me."

"How did this man look," I asked. "Would you know him if you saw him again?"

"I think not," he answered. "I only saw his profile."

"The only explanation I can give is this," said I. "The murderer was in Miss Raymond's room and when she came in he overpowered her and inflicted the gash. He then made for Mrs. Raymond's room and carried her off after having first shot Miss Raymond, who attempted to rise. Outside the house he met Standish, who attempted to stop him and was shot."

Gregson smiled. "That solution is impossible," he said.

As we reached the house I saw John Syrel, who beckoned me aside. "If you come with me," he said, "you will learn something that may be valuable to you."

I excused myself to Gregson and followed Syrel. As we reached the walk he began to talk.

"Let us suppose that the murderer or murderess escaped from the house. Where would they go? Naturally they wanted to get away. Where did they go? Now, there are two railroad stations near by, Santuka and Lidgeville. I have ascertained that they did not go by Santuka. So did Gregson. I supposed, therefore, that they went by Lidgeville. Gregson didn't. That's the difference. A straight line between here and Lidgeville. At first there

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was nothing. About two miles farther on I saw some footprints in a marshy hollow. They consisted of three footprints. I took an impression. Here it is. You see this one is a woman's. I have compared it with one of Mrs. Raymond's boots. They are identical. The others are mates. They belong to a man.

"I compared the bullet I found, where Standish was killed, with one of the remaining cartridges in the revolver that was found in Mrs. Raymond's room. They were mates. Only one shot had been fired and as I had found one bullet, I concluded that either Mrs. or Miss Raymond had fired the shot. I preferred to think Mrs. Raymond fired it because she had fled.

"Summing these things up and also taking into consideration that Mrs. Raymond must have had some cause to try to kill Standish, I concluded that John Standish killed Miss Raymond through the window of her mother's room, Friday night. I also conclude that Mrs. Raymond after ascertaining that her daughter was dead, shot Standish through the window and killed him. Horrified at what she had done she hid behind the door when Mr. Raymond came in. Then she ran down the back stairs. Going outside she stumbled upon the revolver Standish had used and picking it up took it with her. Somewhere between here and Lidgeville she met the owner of these footprints either by accident or design and walked with him to the station where they took the early train for Chicago. The stationmaster did not see the man. He says that only a woman bought a ticket, so I concluded that the young man didn't go. Now you must tell me what Gregson told you."

"How did you know all this," I exclaimed, astonished. And then I told him about the midnight visitor. He did not appear to be much astonished, and he said, "I guess that the young man is our friend of the footprints. Now you had better get a brace of revolvers and pack your suitcase if you wish to go with me to find this young man and Mrs. Raymond, who I think is with him."

Greatly surprised at what I had heard, I took the first train back to town. I bought a pair of fine Colt revolvers, a dark lantern, and two changes of clothing. We went over to Lidgeville and found that a young man had left on the six o'clock train for Ithaca.

On reaching Ithaca we found that he had changed trains and was now halfway to Princeton, New Jersey. It was five o'clock but we took a fast train and expected to overtake him halfway between Ithaca and Princeton. What was our chagrin when on reaching the slow train, to fine he had gotten off at Indianous and was now probably safe.

Thoroughly disappointed, we

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took the train for Indianous. The ticket seller said that a young man in a light gray suit had taken a bus to the Raswell Hotel. We found the bus which the stationmaster said he had taken, in the street. We went up to the driver and he admitted that he had started for the Raswell Hotel in his cab.

"But," said the old fellow, "when I reached there, the fellow had clean disappeared, an' I never got his fare."

Syrel groaned; it was plain that we had lost the young man. We took the next train for New York and telegraphed to Mr. Raymond that we would be down Monday. Sunday night, however, I was called to the phone and recognized Syrel's voice. He directed me to come at once to 534 Chestnut Street. I met him on the doorstep.

"What have you heard?" I asked.

"I have an agent in Indianous," he replied, "in the shape of an Arab boy whom I employ for ten cents a day. I told him to spot the woman and today I got a telegram from him (I left him money to send one) saying to come at once. So come on."

We took the train for Indianous. "Smidy," the young Arab, met us at the station.

"You see, sir, it's dis way. You says, 'Spot de guy wid dat hack,' and I says I would. Dat night a young dude comes out of de house on Pine Street and gives the cabman a ten-dollar bill. An' den he went back into the house and a minute after he comes out wid a woman, an' den day went down here a little way an' goes into a house farther down the street."

We followed Smidy down the street until we arrived at a corner house. The ground floor was occupied by a cigar store, but the second floor was evidently for rent. As we stood there a face appeared at the window and, seeing us, hastily retreated.

Syrel pulled a picture from his pocket. "It's she," he exclaimed, and calling us to follow he dashed into a little side door. We heard voices upstairs, a shuffle of feet and a noise as if a door had been shut.

"Up the stairs," shouted Syrel, and we followed him, taking two steps at a bound. As we reached the top landing we were met by a young man.

"What right have you to enter this house?" he demanded.

"The right of the law," replied Syrel.

"I didn't do it," broke out the young man. "It was this way. Agnes Raymond loved me—she did not love Standish—he shot her; and God did not let her murder go unrevenged. It was well Mrs. Raymond killed him, for his blood would have been on my hands. I went back to see Agnes before she was buried. A man came in. I knocked him down. I didn't know until a moment ago that Mrs. Raymond had killed him.

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"I forgot Mrs. Raymond," screamed Syrel. "Where is she?"

"She is out of your power forever," said the young man.

Syrel brushed past him and, with Smidy and me following, burst open the door of the room at the head of the stairs. We rushed in.

On the floor lay a woman, and as soon as I touched her heart I knew she was beyond the doctor's skill.

"She has taken poison," I said.

Syrel looked around—the young man had gone. And we stood there aghast in the presence of death.

EDITORS' NOTE: *One more comment—from the author of "The Mystery of the Raymond Mortgage" himself: F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote later, in Chapter 1 of "The Romantic Egotist"* [*the earlier version of* THIS SIDE OF PARADISE], *that he "neglected to bring the mortgage into the story in any form"; but, as Mr. Mizener remarked, no one seemed to notice.*

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Another curious little tale from the author of "Death of a Harvard Man" and "The Murder of George Washington." Surely Mr. Gordon has something oddly, if not uniquely, his own . . .

THE DEMISE OF UNCLE WILLIE

by RICHARD M. GORDON

MY SISTER CELIA HAS BEEN ACcused (by our Uncle Willie) of being a snob. Her mind, according to him, like her nose, is retroussé—that is to say, small, sharp, and upturned. I must admit that there is a certain amount of justice in this description although I myself would never go so far as to put it so unkindly.

For that matter, Uncle Willie has had some rather uncomplimentary things to say about me too. He seems to feel that anyone with as strong a sense of what is fitting as I have, is good for nothing except to be a butler in the establishment of some newly rich Oklahoma oil matron.

Be that as it may, I still believe that a man of Uncle Willie's age and substance would be more appropriately transported in a chauffeur-operated Rolls-Royce or a nurse-propelled wheel chair than in the self-driven, fireman's-red MG which he affects. He is 78, many times a millionaire, and such a rotten driver that Celia and I viewed the advent of the MG with equal parts of outrage and hope.

Uncle Willie has an amazing talent (he calls it hard work) for making money. Unfortunately, he has no talent whatever for living up to it and spending it gracefully. He is, I suppose, according to his own lights, generous. Celia and I live with him, or, at any rate, the town house in which we live is his.

Uncle Willie stays with us during the intervals when he is at home recuperating from one or another of the disreputable scrapes he seems to enjoy getting into. When he is at home, of course, we never entertain any of our circle; *they* don't have to put up with his gaucheries. We, however, are willing to forgive him his eccentricities because he is, after all, 78, and we are his only relatives. Sometimes, though, time seems to pass very slowly indeed, and he is disconcertingly vigorous for such an old man.

Early last Wednesday morning, for example, Uncle Willie took off for New England in the MG to go skiing. With him went his valet and inseparable companion, Sven, who, of course, is like no other valet. Sven weighs 280 pounds, has a completely flattened nose and a

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pair of gigantic cauliflower ears, and dresses on all occasions in knee-socks, Bermuda shorts, and an open-necked shirt.

Uncle Willie hired him after seeing him on television wrestling under the *nom de théatre* of Colonel Reinhart von Reich. Sven displayed a spectacularly fraudulent ferocity, an awesome lack of wrestling ability, and a transparent innocence either of the desire or the ability to inflict bodily injury. Since his retirement from the arena, he eats six pounds of steak a day, sleeps until eleven, and calls his employer "Willie-boy."

To get back to last Wednesday: Uncle Willie and Sven decided to take off because the house had become untenable. On the previous Monday night Uncle Willie had managed to appear on one of the all-night radio interview programs that emanate from midtown restaurants. He had proposed, among other things, the formation of two groups to be entrusted with the preservation of the American heritage and tradition. One was to be called the American Leghorn, to be made up, as he said, of patriotic clucks; the other was to be called the D.A.R., a very exclusive organization open only to those who had voted in an American election—the initials were supposed to stand for Democrats and Republicans.

By eight o'clock on Tuesday morning the house was besieged. Burly veterans in campaign caps pelted everyone who tried to enter or leave—with tomatoes and eggs. At ten, two gaunt elderly ladies handcuffed themselves to the iron railing outside and sang *God Bless America* every fifteen minutes. It was frightful.

Uncle Willie spent most of Tuesday at the window gleefully applauding direct hits scored by the Legionnaires on passers-by who stopped to see what was going on or who may have seemed as if they were coming in. He phoned the restaurant of a nearby hotel and every couple of hours hot coffee was served to the mob on the sidewalk. At lunchtime there were egg sandwiches.

But when the whole gang showed up again on Wednesday morning with the duet augmented to glee-club proportions, Uncle Willie got bored. He and Sven packed their bags and ski equipment, crawled out a back window, scaled a fence, and strolled out through the lobby of an apartment building around the corner from our front door. They picked up the MG from the garage and headed north.

As soon as they had gone, I called the restaurant and canceled the order for coffee and lunch, and by three o'clock the little army, showing somewhat less spirit than their ancestors had at Valley Forge, disbanded and went home.

With peace restored, Celia and I spent a quiet afternoon, and after supper, the servants having retired

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to their quarters upstairs, we settled down to a quiet evening in front of a fire in the sitting-room. Celia, as usual, was scanning the fashion ads in some magazine or other, and I was tracing the family geneology through a rather trying, not to say embarrassing time in Warwickshire in the thirteenth century. When the phone rang I looked at Celia, but she gave no indication of doing anything about it, so I answered. It was Sven.

"Hello, Albert? Here it is Sven on long distance! It is bad news—an accident."

There was a portentous silence. I asked, "What happened?"

"Willie-boy ran into a white horse on Route 202 nearby Winchendon in Massachusetts."

"Was he hurt?"

"He was killed! I cannot talk now. I'm upset. The MG is smash so I bring Willie-boy home by train. You make things ready. I go now." He hung up.

I put the phone down slowly and crossed to the fireplace. I poked idly at the fire for a bit and then told Celia, "Uncle Willie's dead."

She marked her place with her finger and looked up. After a while she replied, with seeming irrelevance. "There's such a sweet little black dress at Bergdorf's for $245," she said calmly, "and I can afford it now, can't I?" In a way, it was an epitaph.

I was shocked. I could have overlooked Celia's lack of sentiment, even her cold-bloodedness—after all, poor Celia had taken a great deal from Uncle Willie; but her extravagance was unforgivable.

Thursday was a busy day. The first thing in the morning I called Uncle Willie's lawyer, his bank, and a funeral director. Then I saw Celia off to Newport where she has friends and checked her trunk through from Grand Central on the ticket I had bought for her. Celia herself was in the trunk, so the fact that her friends were wintering in Palm Beach meant very little to her.

When I got home, I decided that I had better dispose of some of Celia's clothes lest the servants, after their Thursday off, think that she went to Newport in winter with nothing but the pink mules, black toreador pants, and Mandarin jacket she had been wearing. I lit a fire in the sitting-room and when it was burning merrily, began adding, piece by piece, the wardrobe Celia might have taken with her had there been room in her trunk.

With the job well under way I felt that I had earned a bit of relaxation—after all, I had taken a great deal from Uncle Willie too and, as for Celia, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. I toasted myself with forty-year-old cognac—yesterday penniless, loving on the charity of an eccentric old man; today, thanks to a white horse in Massachusetts and my own fortitude and the resolu-

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tion to strike while the iron was hot, the master of a vast fortune.

I caught a glimpse of myself in a mirror and looked at my reflection with new respect; why, in one stroke I had made as much money as Uncle Willie had in his whole lifetime, and they called *him* a financial genius. I dropped Celia's prized mink stole on the fire.

The acrid odor of burning cloth and fur, combined with excitement, fatigue, and the satisfaction of a job well done, began to make my lids grow heavy. I fell into a reverie over my brandy. I saw myself in Warwickshire pursuing my researches in the Rolls-Royce that Uncle Willie wouldn't buy—somehow, I couldn't picture myself diffident enough to buy a Bentley. I saw myself returning to my town house in New York, rich and respected. I saw myself . . .

And then the door to the sitting-room opened, and my dream fled to be replaced by an awful apparition.

There stood Uncle Willie, pale as a ghost, large as life, with a Spirit of '76 bandage around his head.

"But you're dead! Sven said . . ."

"Not me, you fool!" roared Uncle Willie. "The horse! Is this all the welcome I get? Where's Celia?"

"She went to Newport," I said.

He came into the room and sniffed. "What's going on in here anyway? You cremating a cow? It smells like branding day at the Lazy S Ranch when I was a boy."

His eye fell on the pile of clothes on the hearth, and I reached for the poker again. Suddenly there was Sven, all 280 pounds of him. I put down the poker.

Uncle Willie looked at the partially burned fur on the fire.

"Celia's mink," he murmured. "Celia wouldn't be found dead in Newport without that mink," he mused. "Or will she?" He turned to Sven. "I'm afraid you'd better call the police," he said. "He thought I was dead, and half a loaf didn't look big enough for him."

Sven picked up the phone. "Hello, police? Here it is Sven! It is bad news—a murder, I think."

I'm comfortable enough where I am, I suppose. At least it's quiet here. In many ways, the situation is a lot less embarrassing than what happened in Warwickshire in the thirteenth century. My only complaint is that there is a guard here named Jensen who does the same things to the English language that Sven does. They'll be the death of me.

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How in the year of our Lord 1881 a killing at Tonso's created a cowboy court, and how the self-appointed coroner's jury under Old Proper Procedure held an unconventional inquest, and how it all led to the hilarious purchase of a tombstone for Obadiah Smith . . . and all as chuckling a Western trail as you've ever followed on the printed page . . . in a phrase, a lovely yarn!

ALL LEGAL AND PROPER

by STEVE FRAZEE

IT WAS MAYBE TWO WEEKS AFTER Ute Henderson died early in '81 of the slow fever at his home place on the Little Peralta. Right close to then, I know for sure.

Spring roundup was on, which meant that for four, five days crews from the five outfits in the southern part of the valley would headquarter at the big holding corrals not far from Joe Tonso's saloon and store.

Those of us who could get away in the evening after work would go up to Tonso's, which didn't mean we got roaring drunk every night. Far from it. We didn't have that kind of money, and Tonso didn't give that kind of credit. We did get together for a little fun and talk.

This particular evening the fun was out. Obadiah Smith showed up, and as usual he was trying to start trouble. He was a whopper-jawed, scorpion-eyed cuss who fancied himself as a gunfighter. We doubted that he was, but still none of us cared to find out the hard way, and that of course made it all the easier for him to be a bully.

Obadiah was particularly vicious about pushing Mexicans around. He worked for Burt Hamlin, who didn't have any Mexican riders, but there was a fair sprinkling of them in other Peralta Valley outfits. They always tried to avoid Obadiah.

This time it was Ragged Hudnall, one of Obadiah's own crew, that Obadiah was giving trouble. "Take a man like you, he don't have the guts for gunfighting," Obadiah said.

"You're right," Ragged said.

"Sure I'm right!" Obadiah swung a look around the room. "And the rest of you are the same way."

"Yep," Clum Bronson agreed, and the rest of us just tried not to pay any attention. Obadiah was having one of his streaks. The best thing to do was let him run.

Not getting any rise out of us, he tried Joe Tonso. "This is a fine two-bit dump you run here, Joe."

Tonson was slopping glasses in a

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bucket behind the bar. "I guess you could call it that."

"I am calling it that!"

"Suit yourself," Tonso said.

Nothing makes a bully meaner than lack of resistance. Obadiah was trying to figure who to abuse next, when Pistol Pete showed up, getting as far as the doorway before he saw Obadiah. Pete was a grinning, bandy-legged little Mexican who worked for the Circle T, a good rider, and about as harmless as they came. We'd nicknamed him because of the big old horsepistol he carried. Nobody had ever seen him shoot the gun and some of his own crew claimed it was too rusty and old to work.

There he was in the doorway, with his grin wiped out by the sight of Obadiah. Pete started to back away.

"Come on in!" Obadiah said.

"I think maybe I have some business somewhere."

"Come on, come on! I'll buy you a drink."

Pete's big-toothed grin winked on and off as he came up to the bar. Tonso eyed Obadiah and said, "Don't start no trouble."

"Who's going to start trouble? You worry too much about this two-bit dump, Joe." Obadiah grabbed Pete's arm and hauled him over close and poured him a drink. Obadiah raised his own glass. "To Pistol Pete, the terror of the Peralta!"

"Si," Pete said, straining to be agreeable. All he wanted to do was have the drink and get out the quickest way he could. He gulped the whiskey.

"Another one," Obadiah said. "We'll drink to all the dirty, chili-picking greasers I'm going to wipe out one of these days."

Peter bobbed his head. He tried to grin. *"Gracias,"* he said, and drank and started to leave.

Obadiah spun him around and threw a glass of whiskey in his face. That was one of Obadiah's favorite tricks; he liked to blind a man, gun whip him down, and stomp him into the floor.

I grabbed a singletree off the wall.

Obadiah reached for his gun. No hurry. He grinned as he watched Pete standing there with his eyes squinched shut and whiskey running off his face.

And that was when Pete, blinded and scared, hauled out his rusty old cannon and blasted away. Talk about a roar! For an instant Pete was blanked out by the powder smoke.

The slug knocked Obadiah back and then he doubled over and hit the floor on his face, deader than a slunk calf.

We stood there with our mouths open.

Pete dropped the gun and ran. He hit the side of the door on the way out, bounced off it, and kept going. He was on his horse and gone before any of us grasped the

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full fact of what had happened.

Then Tonso came trotting from behind the bar and got down beside Obadiah. "He's done for."

"He had it coming," Ed Glassman said.

Some of the boys carried Obadiah outside into the bright moonlight and put him alongside the wall.

"He was bought and paid for a long time ago," Tal Hunter said.

We went back inside to talk about it.

Nate Matlock showed up a few minutes later, leading Pete with a rope around his chest and arms. "I was on my way here when I heard the shot. Then I met Pete, riding like a wild man. He wouldn't stop, so I went after him and roped him. What's going on here?"

We told him.

"Hmm," Nate said. "This calls for a little investigation."

"Never mind that lawbook you stuck your nose into once," Glassman said. "There's no problem here."

Nate paid him no attention. "Why'd you run away?" he asked Pete.

Pete cut loose in Mexican so fast and furious that only Tonso could understand him. "He says he was afraid the Hamlins would start a war of extermination against the Mexicans in the valley because of the shooting. He was going to warn them."

Pete nodded vigorously, and then he cut loose in Mexican again. "He says he thought you were bringing him back here to hang him," Tonso interpreted.

Nate took the rope off Pete. "The facts seem clear—self-defense—but of course we'll have to set on it as a jury."

"Why?" I asked.

"Proper procedure," Nate said. "Due process of law."

Ragged grunted. "Hell! Let's just bury him."

Obadiah's pistol was on the bar. It had fallen out of the holster while we were carrying him outside, and someone had picked it up. "Is that the full extent of the search of the deceased?" Nate asked.

"That's his gun, yep," Tonso answered.

"We'll defer further action along that line for a time." Nate was sure taking charge. "Right now, as a coroner's jury, it's up to us to determine the cause of one Obadiah Smith's death."

"He was shot," I said. "Dead center, by a slug big enough to knock over a buffalo."

Nate shook his head. "Hearsay. Set down, all of you, and let's have the evidence properly presented."

"You mean we haul Obadiah back in here?" Ragged wanted to know.

"That won't be necessary. I want each man to tell carefully and honestly his version of what occurred here tonight."

"You don't talk that way all the

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time," Glassman growled. "What bit you, Nate?"

"His ma used to stack lawbooks on his chair so's he could set high enough to reach the table," Ragged said. "I think his learning seeped in the wrong end of him."

Nate laughed with the rest of us, but he was a serious cuss when he got started on legal matters, and before long he had us testifying to beat the band. No wonder Pete got nervous, what with us looking so solemn, and one after another repeating how he had killed Obadiah.

Pete decided we were working up hanging justice, so he made a break for it. Clum tripped him and we made Pete go sit in the corner on a keg of salt pork while we completed the inquest.

Nate announced the finding. "One Obadiah Smith was killed by a bullet fired from a pistol in the hands of Pistol Pete, and the whole mess was self-defense."

"That was a heap of talking to get around to something that even Tonso's hound knew beforehand," Ragged observed. "Now, where do we get our pay?"

"Pay?" Nate shook his head.

"I was on a jury once and I got paid," Glassman argued.

"This wasn't exactly a jury—not the kind that gets paid, leastwise," Nate said. He thought for a while. "Well, I guess each man, including Pete, can have one drink."

"Who pays?" Tonso asked quickly.

"The court will take the matter of payment under advisement," Nate said.

Tonso grunted. "That means I'm stuck for the drinks." He set them out.

I didn't drink, and when I asked for a can of tomatoes, Tonso balked. "You get whiskey, like the rest, or nothing."

Whiskey was two bits a shot. Tomatoes cost one buck a can. "All right, give me a cigar," I said. I didn't smoke, either, so I gave the dried-out black stogey to Pete.

Pete still wasn't sure that we weren't going to hang him. The cigar seemed like a last gesture. Once more he started to leave in a hurry, but someone hauled him back and Pete at last got it into his head that we weren't holding anything against him.

"It's getting late," Ragged said. "We got plenty of hard work again tomorrow, so let's bury Obadiah and get out of here."

"It's not that easy," Nate said. "There's certain legal aspects yet to be taken care of. Tonso, give us your best lantern."

We assembled around the deceased. He didn't look very good in the pale moonlight.

Something occurred to Nate. "You know, we haven't actually proved him dead."

"Huh! You prove it," I said. "I'm satisfied."

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"We really ought to have a doctor say so."

"I hear there's one about seventy miles from here," Glassman said. "Go get him, Nate."

"I'll have no levity." Nate studied Obadiah's body. "Yeah, I'd say there's no doubt about it."

"Where do we bury him?" Ragged asked. "Or does that take another court session?"

"The deceased will have to be thoroughly searched in the presence of witnesses."

"Help yourself," Tonso said.

"Get a pencil and some paper, Joe," Nate ordered. He looked at me. "You're appointed to do the searching."

"Who appointed me?"

"I did."

"I just signed the appointment!"

"Court order," Nate said. "Get on with it before you're held in contempt."

Everybody else was quick to support him.

I rustled through Obadiah's pockets as quick as I could. I found a Mexican dollar, a Piper knife, and some crumbly twist tobacco. "There you are."

"There's a bulge under his shirt," Nate said. "Proceed with the examination of the deceased."

"Why don't you just call him Obadiah? I'm getting sick of that deceased stuff!"

"Proceed," Nate said.

He must have been born to the law. He made a man feel that there were robed justices and centuries of codes bearing down on us.

Around Obadiah's waist was a money belt of fine leather with circles of stitching. It was heavy. When I gave it to Nate, he ripped some of the stitches with his knife and out popped a twenty-dollar gold piece.

We went inside where the light was better. Sewn around the belt in little flat pockets were twenty-three gold pieces like the first.

"By Ned, he's robbed a bank somewhere!" Ragged said.

Nate was sort of stunned like the rest of us. He said it would be proper, we still being a jury, to allow certain expenses from the money while deliberating.

We deliberated for three drinks around. For me it was a can of tomatoes.

By that time the jury was some loosened up and ready to deliberate in earnest, but Nate called a halt to further expenses. "How much is his horse and rig worth?"

It was a good outfit. We decided on a hundred and ninety bucks. Glassman said make it two hundred to keep things even.

"His pistol?" Nate asked.

"Twenty bucks," Clum Bronson said, "holster and all."

We agreed that it was a fair price.

"What happens to his stuff?" Ragged asked.

Nate scowled. "That's what I'm trying to figure out." He raised his

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voice. "Does anybody know of any relatives of the late Obadiah Smith?"

"Huh!" Glassman snorted. "He never even had a friend, let alone a relative."

Hunter said, "We got a much better idea where he went than where he come from." He hefted Obadiah's pistol. "I *would* give five bucks for this."

"I guess anyone would," Nate said curtly, "but that ain't the way we're handling this business."

"How are we handling it?" I asked.

Nate cleared his throat. He sort of drew himself up, which wasn't hard, since he was about six feet three to start with. "Gentlemen," he said, like he was addressing Congress, "we've got an estate on our hands."

Danged if he didn't make it sound pretty important, but Ragged grunted disgustedly. "Estates are houses and a lot of land and money in a bank and that sort of stuff."

Nate shook his head. "Everything Obadiah left is his estate—money, horse, gun—the whole works. We will have to apply the due process of law to the handling of it. I'm hereby declaring myself administrator and the rest of you deputy administrators."

"Deputies?" Pistol Pete looked uneasy. As a matter of fact, none of us was much taken with the word.

"What's this here administrator thing?" Ragged asked.

"That means we take care of everything Obadiah left until it can be disposed of in a legal way for the benefit of his estate, or heirs."

"How can you benefit the estate by disposing of it?" Clum asked. "And if Obadiah ain't got no heirs—"

"Objection overruled!" said Nate.

"It sounds simple enough," said Glassman. "Let's divvy up the works and be done with it."

Nate looked like he'd been hit in the belly with a corral pole. "We can't do no such thing! We've got to follow proper procedure."

"Yeah? Well, you name it," Ragged said.

Nate hemmed and hawed. "I'll have to take it under advisement."

"How long does this here advisement last?" Tonso asked.

"Until our next session tomorrow evening."

In the meantime, Nate would be doing the same work as the rest of us, and getting just as dirty and sweaty; but he made it sound like he was going to a high-paneled room somewhere and throw a study on all the law ever written.

"I don't want Obadiah laying around out there until tomorrow evening," Tonso said. "What kind of business would folks think I'm running?"

We buried Obadiah down in the gulch, where we could do more bank caving than shoveling.

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We were too busy the next day to do any talking about Obadiah's estate, but each one of us was thinking. Personally, I thought it wouldn't be too awful if it took quite a spell to figure things out. That way I could get a lot of canned tomatoes.

That night when we went to Tonso's, Nate knocked my dream in the head. "I've set four drinks per man as the expenses of each meeting of us administrators. That means you get one can of tomatoes, or the equivalent in value of four drinks."

"You sure must have been thinking hard today."

"The session is in session," Nate said. "Who's got an idea about Obadiah's estate?"

"I think we ought to consider everything real careful before we make any moves," Tonso said.

"Sure we should," Glassman snorted. "You're boarding Obadiah's horse and getting paid for it, and making twenty-four cents profit on every two-bit glass of whiskey we drink. We could set on this case all year and you'd be happy."

"I'll have no disturbances here!" Nate said. "Now, who's got an idea?"

Tonso's blue tick hound came in and lay down with a sigh near the door.

"I've been thinking," Hunter announced. "Let's sell the whole estate to Tonso here, and—"

"Fine!" Glassman said. "And then what do we do with the proceeds?"

"Lemme finish, damn it! We turn the whole estate over to Tonso. Then he provides free drinks for any cowboy that shows up, until the estate is gone. Of course he don't say beforehand that the drinks is free."

Offhand, that sounded like a fine idea. Tonso was nodding agreeably.

"What happens after everybody in the valley finds out about the free drinks?" Nate asked.

"There'd be quite a rush," Hunter admitted. "But—"

"I know who'd be leading that rush, too," Glassman said. "What with you staying on the Bragg place all summer, and the rest of us out in the hills in cow camps."

"Calling me a drunkard, huh?" Hunter swung around and took a swing at Glassman.

Glassman jumped back and fell over the hound, which let out an awful howl. Nate grabbed Hunter. "Order! Order! We ain't going to have no session if that's the way everybody's going to act."

"He called me a drunkard!" Hunter yelled.

"He was trying to cheat us!" Glassman yelled.

We didn't go nowhere that night.

As a matter of fact, we didn't get nowhere the following night either. There were some pretty fair ideas about getting rid of Obadiah's

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estate, but Nate put the kibosh on all of them. We began to call him Old Proper Procedure, and we were getting about as disgusted with him as we were with Obadiah for getting himself killed with an estate wrapped around his belly.

When we were going out to the horses, Ragged made a good suggestion. "Let's take the estate and send Nate away to study law."

"Yeah," Hunter said. "Maybe to Europe."

We rode back toward camp.

Ragged said, "You brought on this whole thing, Pete. There ought to be some way we could make you responsible."

"No, no!" Pete said.

"I got it!" Hunter yelled. "All that money Obadiah had proves he was wanted somewhere for robbery. There's a reward out for him, sure as shooting, and it's a cinch it amounts to as much as the estate. Pete killed him, so Pete gets the estate."

That sounded like straight thinking, but Tate said, "There is no proof that there was a reward, and even if that was true, rewards ain't paid out of a man's estate. The motion is overruled."

Hunter got sore. "I quit! I ain't setting on the case no more."

"You'll be in contempt," Nate warned

"All right, I will!" Hunter paused. "What's that?"

"Not showing proper respect for a court and legal procedure."

"Where the hell is the court? You mean us arguing and gabbing every night in Tonso's?"

"Yep," Nate said. "We're the law, every one of us. We've got to act like it. We're responsible for our actions to the Territorial Courts."

"I quit," Hunter said, but it was pretty weak this time.

"Bury the money in a big hole," Pete said. "We shoot the horse. We bury him too. On top we put the lariat so it will turn into a snake if anyone tries to dig."

"Yeah," Ragged said, "and we throw Nate in with the rest of the stuff."

"We ain't burying nothing," Nate said. "We're going to settle this thing like it should be settled, all legal and proper."

We had one more night to go. After that, we were going to be scattered all over the Peralta country until fall. I didn't see much chance of getting the estate settled.

When we went back to Tonso's that last evening, there was a six horse team in the corral and a wagon with a hunk of rock on it that must have weighed six tons. My back ached from just looking at that walloper of a stone.

Tonso introduced us to Jake Foley, a rawboned fellow with a face about like the rock on the wagon. We'd heard about Foley. He'd taken up a claim near Dirty Billy Springs and spent his time blasting rocks.

"Mr. Foley here," said Tonso, "is

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on his way to sell a gravestone to Ute Henderson's widow."

Ragged began to laugh. Nate rammed him in the ribs.

"What's so funny?" Foley asked.

"I didn't tell him," Tonso said.

Nate took the floor, naturally. "Ute Henderson was married to an Indian, Foley. She and her family got up and left when he died. As far as we know, they took Ute along to bury him somewhere in the rocks up high."

"Why, I'd heard he was one of the leading citizens of the country!"

"I reckon he was," Nate said, "but that's what happened to him. You won't be selling no rock down there, Foley."

"Stone." Foley eyed us all with suspicion.

Tonso set out the first round of our expenses. "I persuaded Mr. Foley to wait here until you boys had a chance to talk to him about buying his rock for—"

"Stone," Foley said. "For whom?"

"For Obadiah Smith," Tonso finished.

"Buy a rock!" Clum said, outraged. "What for? The country's full of rocks."

Nate set his glass down all of a sudden. "A stone for Obadiah! Tonso, I think you've got it!"

"Got what?" Hunter asked.

"We'll use the money we've been discussing to buy a tombstone for Obadiah," Nate said.

Naturally, he didn't want Foley to know it was an estate because the price of everything always goes up when an estate is involved.

Foley didn't ask about money. He said, "Was Mr. Smith a leading citizen?"

Hunter choked on his whiskey.

"Yes, you could say that."

You could say it, sure enough. It was a hell of a lie, but you could say it.

"I don't believe I've ever heard of him," Foley said.

"You hadn't heard that Ute Henderson was married to a Ute woman either," I said. "There's probably quite a bit you don't know about our leading citizens."

"Sure!" Tonso said. "If you ever got away from your quarry, you'd have heard of Obadiah. I think your first stone will be a fitting monument to him."

"They don't make the kind of monuments he ought to have," Glassman said. "But maybe Foley's rock will do."

"Stone."

Nate asked, "How much were you figuring on getting from Ute Henderson's family?"

"Maybe seventy-five dollars," Foley said, "if it's any of your business."

"Maybe we can come close to that." Nate was playing it cautious.

"The price is not everything." Foley kept looking at us with considerable doubt. "My stones are not just something to be sold. They're

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monuments to last for centuries, and I'm rather particular about where they are placed."

Sure, he was trying to run the price up, I thought. Well, that was no problem; we had a lot of money to put into Obadiah's stone.

"It's as fine a piece of granite as I ever quarried."

"We'll pay your price," Nate said. "Maybe more."

Foley didn't like the look of things. He got a stubborn expression. "I'll tell you right now, I have my mind set on placing it in a worthy place."

"We've got just the place, right down in the gulch," Hunter said.

Foley looked horrified. "Down in a gulch!"

"We'll work it out," Nate said hastily. "How much for the rock—the stone?"

"Who was this Obadiah?" Foley asked.

"What's the difference?"

"Considerable. No matter what the price, I'm not placing a stone on the grave of some drifting gambler." Foley was a Vermonter, we found out later. He had a narrow view of some things that never changed all his life.

Foreseeing the end of court expenses, Ragged was crowding the bottle. "Obadiah was no gambler. He was a loud-mouthed, no—"

"One of us, one of our friends," Nate cut in.

You could see Foley didn't consider any of us fitting subjects for one of his stones. That man had a whale of a pride in his granite and his craftsmanship.

"How did Obadiah meet his death?" Foley asked.

"I shoot him!" Pete said eagerly.

Foley swung his granite face toward Pete. "I don't like the sound of this. I don't think your Obadiah was the kind of man I respect."

"What's that got to do with us buying your rock?" Ragged shouted. "We got the money."

"Stone," said Foley.

"It's still a rock. I can show you a million tons of rock just by going to the door!"

"Not like mine," Foley said. "What I've got is a piece of the finest kind of blue granite, without a flaw in it."

"Granite, or whatever it is—we'll still buy it," Ragged said. "All you want for it is money."

Foley's blue eyes turned about as angry as anything you ever saw. "Money is never the most important consideration in the placing of monumental stones," he said coldly. "My father and his father before him often refused large sums to set their stones on the graves of immoral people."

"Who said Obadiah was immoral?" Nate sounded like we'd all been insulted. "Are you insulting his memory?"

Foley didn't back up one bit. "Sin comes in many ways. Why was it that he was killed by him?" He jerked his hand toward Pete.

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"I will show you how I killed him," Pete said. "He—"

"Never mind, Pete!" Nate said. He smiled at Foley. "Pete is like a kid. He's a little excitable. You might even say he's not quite all there. Why, he wouldn't shoot a magpie. How about it, boys?"

"Not Pete!" we all cried.

Pete was a little confused. He was going strong in Mexican, telling how he'd shot Obadiah.

"What's he saying?" Foley asked.

"Telling about how he killed twenty-two Indians one time, single-handed," Nate said. "See what I mean about him being a little off?"

Foley was not convinced. "If he's crazy, why do you let him carry that big pistol?"

"A toy," Nate said. "Worthless." He stepped over and grabbed Pete's gun. We'd examined it after Obadiah was killed, and found only two caps on the nipples, the one that had primed the charge that killed Obadiah, and one other on the opposite side of the cylinder.

The odds were a hundred to one that Pete hadn't even cleaned it since the killing.

Nate pointed the cannon up and began to pull the trigger. It clicked three times. "See there?" he said, and should have quit while he was winners, but he went one chamber too far and the gun like to lifted the roof off.

Tonso's hound let out a bay and ran outside to look for game.

Nate recovered fast. "How could a man kill another man with a gun that hits once out of five times?" He tossed the pistol back to Pete.

"Four times," Foley said. He coughed in the powder smoke as he looked at the hole in the roof. "I guess you've proved your point. I'll have to allow that Pete doesn't look like a murderer, either."

"Si!" Pete said. "I murdered him plenty, you bet your neck!"

"So you'll sell us the rock—the stone?" Nate asked.

"I don't know," Foley said. "How did Obadiah die?'

"A natural death. Caused by something that he was born with, I think," Nate said.

It was natural enough, all right. It would have been plenty unnatural if he hadn't died after getting hit in the heart with that thumb-sized hunk of lead.

"Yes, he had that trouble all his life," Ragged said. He took off his hat.

Foley eyed us all narrowly. "He wasn't a sinful man?"

"Good to his horse," I said. "Always took off his hat when he was talking to Mrs. Hamlin." Those were facts, and just about everything on the good side that I could remember about Obadiah.

Some of the others could lie better. They built Obadiah up considerable. He'd been polite, thoughtful of others, helpful and honest. Before they went too far, Nate shut them off, and just in time, for Foley

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said dryly, "I never put a stone on the grave of a saint before."

"We'll have to admit that on occasion he did use swear words," Nate said.

"I use a little of that at times myself," Foley admitted.

"He was thrifty," Tonso said. "He saved money."

"Ah!" said Foley.

"How much for the rock—the stone?" Ragged asked.

"I won't go less than seventy-five dollars."

"A measly seventy-five bucks for a stone for a man like Obadiah?" Hunter said in an outraged tone.

"I can get a larger one, but that will take time."

"The one outside will do," Nate said, "but we feel that we'll have to spend more for it. One hundred dollars."

"Two hundred," I said.

"Three hundred bucks!" Glassman yelled.

Tonso whacked the bar with his hand. "Four hundred!"

"Four fifty!" Ragged shouted.

"One thousand boocks!" Pete howled.

"Told you he was crazy," Nate said.

Foley thought we were all crazy. "I don't appreciate such joking." And he walked out.

"We're not joking!" Nate yelled. "This is serious."

We followed Foley outside, all of us yelling and trying to make him believe us. Those Vermonters are a hard-headed lot, I'll tell you. Foley was sure he was being hoorawed by a bunch of heathen cowboys. In all my life I never found a man so hard to give money to.

After Nate got us quieted down, he talked like a good fellow to Foley. Tonso figured up the bar expenses, added a dollar and a half for boarding the horse, and came up with a figure that was Obadiah's entire estate.

"It's our final offer," Nate said. "I can't be responsible for what the boys might do if you don't accept."

We looked as tough as we could, although I'm sure that didn't influence Foley in the least.

"Is there something sinful or unlawful in this?" he asked.

"No!" Nate said. "Believe me, we're straining ourselves to be as legal as we can."

"It's an unusual offer," Foley said. He thought a long time. "I'll take it."

We all breathed with relief.

"We'll show you where the grave is, so you can start setting the stone tomorrow," Nate said.

"Down in a gulch?" Foley shook his head. "No stone of mine will be placed on loose ground, no matter what the price."

Dead or alive, that Obadiah was nothing but trouble!

"You've already made the deal!" Ragged yelled at Foley.

"Oh, no! The sale of a stone includes the setting of it, and if I don't

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have solid ground to put my stones on, I don't sell."

Ragged threw his hat on the ground. "It's fifteen feet down to solid ground in that wash!"

"I don't favor gulches as a burial place to start with," Foley said stonily. "There's no deal."

"What do you favor?" Glassman asked.

"Rocky ground. It don't settle too much." Foley glanced at the point of the hill above Tonso's. "That looks like a likely place."

"Obadiah ain't buried there," I protested.

"Move him," Foley said.

Hunter groaned. "It's solid rock up there!"

"Good. My stone will set well in a place like that."

Nate shook his head. "The way you see things, your stones are more important than the people themselves."

Foley thought that over. "Yes," he said, "that's true."

We went back into Tonso's to argue things out. But there was no shaking Foley. He wasn't going to set his stone on loose ground, and we weren't going to dig a hole in that rock.

"You move him, Foley," Ragged suggested. "You're getting enough for the stone to move all the graves from here to the mountains."

"I'm a stone mason, not an undertaker."

Nate had been thinking like sixty. He said, "Foley, ain't it proper to set monuments on land to someone lost at sea."

"Yes."

"All right, put Obadiah's monument on the hill."

You could see that Foley was pretty favorably taken with that idea. "You say his grave is lost?"

"Yep!" Ragged said. "We buried him at night, and now it's doubtful that any of us could say for sure where he is."

Hunter tried to mess that up. "Who says so? Obadiah ain't lost. We know right where he is."

"Not me," I said.

"Me neither," Ragged said. "The first big rain this summer will wash sand and gravel down that gulch until nobody could say where Obadiah's grave was."

Hunter was stubborn. "We ain't had that rain yet. I know where his grave is."

Foley shook his head. "The man is right. There's deceit in this, and I won't be a party to deceit."

There we were, stuck fast against Foley's pride and hard morality. By gosh, you had to admire him, but at the same time it was disgusting to have been so close to settling Obadiah's estate and then have everything fall through.

We looked to Nate to come up with something, but all he said was, "Since we're getting nowhere, I think I'll remove all restrictions on the expense limit."

The expenses began to flow pretty fast. Foley was right in there,

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holding his own. His weather-toughened face got a bit red, but I couldn't see that he was loosening up much, and then I noticed that he was rimming his glass with his thumb and forefinger.

That means he was building the capacity of it up by making an extra reservoir at the top.

After about an hour I had to allow that for once I'd got all the canned tomatoes I could handle.

The conversation had got pretty loud and it had extended to about everything under the sun. It was then that Nate brought us back to business. "We'll have a vote to determine whether Obadiah's grave is lost or not."

Every one of us except Hunter voted that it was lost beyond reasonable finding, whatever that was.

"No, sir!" Hunter said. He was just too stubborn to see the light. "I'll show you where it is."

He lurched away from the bar and started out. He fell over the doorsill with a crash and lay there groaning.

"I accept that as evidence that he was incompetent to vote," Nate declared. "Therefore, the grave of Obadiah Smith is lost by unanimous action of this group."

"Second the motion!" yelled Pistol Pete. He was learning something, though not much, about democratic procedure.

We looked at Foley. He was solemn as an owl as he absently rimmed another glass, this time using two fingers, and that just about doubled the size of the shot. He took the drink, sucking the excess off the top before downing the rest.

"I agree," he said.

"It is, therefore, fitting and proper that Obadiah's stone be erected on a suitable hill in the vicinity where he was last seen," Nate said. "All those in favor—"

"Aye!" we yelled.

"No more expenses," Nate said.

"Hell, I was just beginning to understand law," said Ragged, who could hardly walk by now.

"And what do you want as the inscription?" Foley asked. He took two cuts at the last word before he got it right, and then it was still a little mushy.

Nate said, "Obadiah Smith, 1881. That's enough."

We all wanted to add something. *In Memory Of* or *Rest In Peace* or *He Was a Good Man*. I thought *He Died Game* would be pretty good.

Hunter staggered to his feet and came back to the bar. He'd skinned both shins on the high log sill and was feeling mean and ill-used. "Just put *To Hell With Him* on there," he suggested.

Nate had his way. Nothing but the name and date.

We sold Obadiah's gun to Tonso for twenty bucks, and added that to the gold. It was somewhere close to four hundred and fifty bucks, a heap of money for a stone, but get-

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ting that estate settled was worth it.

But we'd overlooked something. There was still the horse and the rig, which we'd appraised at two hundred. Tonso called that to our attention.

"You know, of course, Foley, that a horse is involved in the deal," Nate said.

"No, I don't know it." Foley had all the gold before him on the bar. The way he was staring at it, you could tell that his conscience and principles were having a real wrassle with the greed that's a natural part of any man. "I don't know nothing about a horse, and I don't want nothing to do with it."

"You have to take the horse."

"I don't even have to take this money." Foley weaved a little, but his eyes were hard and steady as he looked at the gold pieces and then around at us. "I'm thinking there's something sinful in this. It's too much money for the stone."

"The horse is extra for cutting the inscription," Nate said.

"No! That's included in the first price."

I had a feeling that it wouldn't take much for Foley to shove that pile of gold back at us.

"I'll buy the horse and rig," Tonso said, "but I won't go any two hundred. I'll go seventy-five."

"It's a deal!" Ragged said.

"No, it aint," Nate said. "We set the price at two hundred, and that's what we'll get."

Tonso shook his head. "Not from me, you won't."

"You ain't shoving the horse off on me neither," Foley said.

I tell you that Foley was a hard man to deal with. All of us but Nate were ready to give up. It just didn't seem that Obadiah's estate could be settled, legal or otherwise.

But Nate was a hard man to beat, as many a lawyer found out later when Nate went into the law business in earnest. He wagged his finger at Foley. "In payment for services to the estate of Obadiah Smith you have just accepted one bay horse, with saddle and bridle, for two hundred dollars."

"Not me," Foley said. "I've taken too much already. You'll have to do something else with the horse."

"Would you deprive our departed comrade, Obadiah Smith, of the esteem the world will feel for him by leaving him in an unmarked grave?"

"The grave is lost," Foley said. "I ain't depriving him of nothing."

"Of the esteem the world will feel for him by seeing a beautiful monument on a hill in the vicinity where he last was seen? Would you deprive him of that?"

"Yep," Foley said, "if it means you're trying to force a horse on me."

"You just sold the horse."

"Huh?"

"You just sold it to Tonso here for seventy-five dollars. Give him the money, Joe."

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Tonso counted out seventy-five dollars and added it to Foley's pile.

"There," Nate said. "Nobody can say it's sinful to *lose* money on a deal."

"Hah!" said Foley. "That's even more sinful than making too much."

The way he looked made me wonder if we were ever going to get that estate out of our way.

Suddenly he heaved up tall as he could and looked at us like we were the scum of the earth. "I confess to greed," he said. "I was swayed by the power of gold. But now I renounce the whole deal."

"Nobody asked you to shoot your grandmother," Ragged said. "Just take the money and that'll settle the whole business."

"No!"

Nate cut in smooth and fast. "Of course on transactions of this kind, we do expect a contribution to our cause."

"The wages of sin—what cause?"

"Our Church Fund," Nate said.

"There is no church here. That was one of the first things I inquired about when I came last fall."

"Of course not," Nate said. "That's what our Fund is for—to build one." He looked Foley hard in the eye. "I suggest that you contribute all but seventy-five dollars of that money to the Fund."

Foley wrassled with that for a while. "I have no right to give the money. I've renounced it all."

"You took it once. Now you're obstructing justice and law."

"That's the first I've heard of law around here," Foley said.

"We've got it and you're obstructing it."

Foley counted out seventy-five dollars real slow. He put it into his pocket. "For my stone." He shoved the rest away from him. "Do what you wish with it."

"No," Nate said. "We need your statement that you're contributing it to the Church Fund."

"All right!" Foley yelled. "I'm giving it to the church!"

Nate shoved the money at Tonso. "Deposit this with the rest of the Church Fund."

"How much have you got?" Foley asked.

"I haven't counted lately," Tonso said, "but it's coming along."

Suddenly we realized that the thing was done. All but Hunter. He might have argued against it, except that he was now fast asleep at the card table. It was some rigamarole Nate went through to get rid of Obadiah's estate, but he assured us it was according to due process.

Foley was a fine stonecutter. Obadiah's monument, big and solid, is still on the hill where he set it. You ought to hear some of the stories told to day about how it came to be there, and what a great citizen and pioneer Obadiah Smith was.

In a way, he was. He sure made the first, and the biggest, contribution to the church that we got around to building a year later.

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THE MURDER MEMOIRS OF JONAS P. JONAS

THE CASE OF THE AUCTION CATALOGUE

by E. X. FERRARS

"I NEVER REALIZED UNTIL I RETIRED," my uncle by marriage, Jonas P. Jonas, said to me one day, "how hard it was going to be to change the habits of a lifetime. There were things I'd been promising myself through forty years of active life—and it *was* an active life, up at all hours, on my feet almost for days at a time when I had a tricky shadowing job to do, jumping on a train going to the north of Scotland when I'd been expecting a quiet evening at home with a nice book, and of course keeping my ears open all the time in case I missed something.

"Yes, it was active all right, though it was never the rushing around that I minded. It was the dullness I couldn't take. Most of the people I'd have to shadow would be very dull and stupid. Violent, perhaps, but that's duller in its way than you might think, and all that talk I'd have to listen to wouldn't ever have compared with the conversation in Dickens and Thackery.

"So one of the things I used to promise myself, all those years, was that when I retired I was going to catch up on some of the reading that had always been interrupted. Good books, long books—I was going to read them all. And what d'you think I actually read now? Newspapers, of course—and catalogues.

"I can't say exactly why catalogues have such a fascination for me, unless perhaps it's the way they start you dreaming and making plans. Be that as it may, I once saved an innocent man from being arrested for murder through this habit of mine of reading catalogues.

"It happened on a train when I was on my way back to London from Yorkshire. I was returning from a holiday, and I was in a pretty bad mood—it had rained nearly all the time I'd been away; but just that day, on my way home, it was fine and sunny.

"Besides that, I'd somehow forgotten to get myself anything to read on the train. From time to time I looked enviously at the only other person in my compartment, a man who was reading a catalogue; the rest of the time I dozed or looked out at the lovely sunny landscape scurrying by.

"He was a nervous type, this other man, one of the sort who think they can make a train go faster by frequently looking at their watches. Across the compartment I couldn't

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see what sort of catalogue he was reading, so I couldn't tell if he was choosing roses for his garden or rare wines or long-playing records; but at least I could tell it was something that mattered to him a good deal.

"So just for practice, because in my job it might always come in handy, I started to ask myself what sort of thing was likely to be important to a man like that. But I was drowsy and dropping off to sleep when suddenly the train slowed down, and the man snatched up his belongings and rushed off down the corridor.

"But he'd made a mistake. We hadn't got to where he thought we had. The train didn't stop at all, and after a few minutes he was back, breathing hard and looking at his watch more often than before.

"In fact, it was another ten minutes before we got to the station he wanted. As before, he grabbed his coat, bag, and umbrella, and ran out long before the train had actually stopped. As soon as it did, he was out of it in a flash, and I saw him racing across the platform far ahead of any other passengers who'd got out there. I had a last glimpse of him outside the barrier, waving wildly for a taxi. It was only then I noticed that in his hurry he'd left his catalogue behind.

"A good many people wouldn't have been interested, but I, naturally, perked up at sight of it. It was a catalogue of an auction sale that was coming off that day in a big house in the neighborhood, and it was due to begin within a few minutes of the time the train got into the station. All his impatience seemed to have been because the lots he was specially interested in, to judge by the pencil marks he'd made—mostly old glass, I remember—came right at the beginning of the sale.

"Well, I settled down happily to read the whole thing through and dream about picking up Queen Anne silver and priceless first editions for a song. But just about then the track curved sharply, and as the train swung round on it the sun came in at the window. I've told you it was a fine bright day. Well, the sun on the pages of the catalogue was too bright for me to go on reading, so I pulled down the blind. Then I settled down for a good time 'buying' Persian rugs.

"It didn't last long. Suddenly there was a commotion down the corridor. I looked out to see what was up and was told they'd just found a woman strangled in the end compartment.

"They had it all clear, almost at once, who had done the murder. It was my 'friend' with the catalogue. The people in the two compartments between mine and the one the dead woman was in had seen him rush by, and rush back again a few minutes later. Then they'd all seen him leave the train and go flying out of the station as if the police were already after him.

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"Well, I thought they were probably right. But as everyone was talking at the same time I didn't say much myself. I just looked at the woman and the compartment she was in, and at the people who'd been in the two compartments between hers and mine.

"In the one nearest to me was a middle-aged Yorkshire woman with a daughter, a son-in-law, and their baby. They'd been having tea when the commotion was started by the guard coming along to look at tickets, and there were buns and biscuits and thermos bottles spread out all over the seats.

"In the other compartment there was a man by himself, a tall, prim-looking, elderly man, who didn't do as much talking as the others, but was quite clear about having seen my 'friend' go by, and that he'd been in an obviously agitated state. When they asked me about that, I agreed he'd been agitated, but I went on looking at the dead woman and thinking about her.

"She was a flashy sort, poor girl, about thirty or so. Evidently she'd been reading when she was attacked, because a magazine and some broken spectacles with gaudy rims were on the floor at her feet. She'd been sitting in a seat next to the corridor, with all the blinds pulled down on that side of the compartment. That had been done by the murderer, I thought, to hide what he was up to and not to keep the sun out, because it was through the windows on the other side that it was coming in.

"I noticed an odd thing, though. The girl had been sitting next to the corridor, yet her luggage was in the rack over one of the seats closest to one of the other windows; and on that seat was a crumpled newspaper, while on the floor in front of it were several cigarette ends, marked with lipstick of her color. So that was plainly where she'd been sitting for the first part of the journey, and she'd moved over later. But why?

"I went on thinking about that while they were all agreeing that the police at the last place we'd stopped ought to be informed immediately about the man who'd got off there. Then I told them they needn't trouble. They had the murderer on the train with them still, I said, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if he was the officious fellow who'd noticed so much about the agitation of the other man.

"Of course my compartment companion had been agitated, I said. He'd been afraid he'd be too late at an auction sale to acquire some valuable Georgian glassware. But the fact was that the woman had been sitting and reading and smoking by the *outer* window, and had only moved nearer to the corridor when the train had swung round a bend and the bright sun had come in at that window. Because I'd happened to be reading myself at the time, instead of dozing, I could tell them

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exactly when that had been. It had been when I was in the middle of the Oriental rug section in the catalogue.

"I'd pulled the blind down then, but she'd moved across the compartment into the shade instead. And by that time the man who'd left the catalogue behind had been at his sale, bidding for cut-glass decanters and rose bowls.

"They didn't believe me all at once, but after a bit they began to see there was something in it. The police found out later that the elderly man was a doctor on whom the woman had a hold for some unprofessional conduct.

"I kept the catalogue as a sort of memento of the case. I've got piles and piles of them at home, and when I might be catching up on my reading of Proust and Dostoevsky I find myself thumbing through lists of Old Masters and postage stamps instead. It's a silly habit, but I'm too old to get out of it now."

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GOODBYE, PICCADILLY

by JOHN P. MARQUAND

(continued from page 48)

It was Jim Briscoe's old chief, Mr. Henry, who had pointed out Bjor at Dumbarton Oaks. and Jim Briscoe remembered the occasion very clearly. Mr. Henry had handed him a note, and he had glanced at it carelessly in the way Mr. Henry had taught him, folded it, and put it in his pocket.

Never leave any paper of any sort around, Mr. Henry had always said, and never doodle on scratch pads. Keep papers in your pockets, and after anything like the Dumbarton show, go to the office and burn them personally. Jim Briscoe could still remember Mr. Henry's note.

"Observe carefully man three from right of military attaché," Mr. Henry had written. "Features may be useful future reference."

That was how Jim Briscoe first saw the man called Bjor, who, intercepts showed, worked under the cover name Max Blenheim. He had seldom seen Mr. Henry evince as much interest, and later when they were safe in the office, Mr. Henry had been unusually loquacious.

"Frankly, I was surprised to see him there," Mr. Henry had said. "He's the best man they have in the NKVD. There's a rumor he's the one who got our proximity fuse, and it might very well be so. You'd better read his dossier; he plays around with all the physicists."

"How did you happen to recognize him, sir?" Jim Briscoe asked.

"Oh," Mr. Henry said, "I saw him once when I was in Moscow with the Dean party. We didn't speak, of course. He was just in the background at one of those receptions, but I remembered him because he had been pointed out to me previously."

"When was that, sir?" Jim Briscoe asked.

"Oh," Mr. Henry said, "that was before the war. He was in the Reading Room of the British Museum. He has a handsome academic face, you know. I don't know how the devil he got there, except that it was about the time the British were trying to negotiate that defense pact. Yes, he was right there in the Reading Room."

It always paid to remember everything Mr. Henry said. Few people were as familiar as he with the contemporary intelligence picture or with its general theory and practice. Although it was not required reading, Jim Briscoe had made a study of Bjor. It was important to know as much as possible of personalities across the fence. He still remembered the appearance and

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something of the personality of the man Bjor . . .

Sir Godfrey was sipping a second cup of tea.

"Can you describe the fellow for us, just in case—"

Sir Godfrey did not finish the sentence. It was not necessary. He meant, of course, in case something happened to Jim Briscoe.

"Yes, sir," Jim Briscoe said. "I can tell you how he looked ten years ago, and I don't believe he's changed much."

"Splendid," Sir Godfrey said. "Get out your notebook, Mark."

"His age is now forty-seven," Jim Briscoe said. "Height, five feet eleven; weight about one seventy, and I don't believe he's put on weight—there are not many fat men in the NKVD—black hair like Uncle Joe's as a young man, slightly wavy and not close-cropped, the kind of hair that wouldn't have much gray in it at forty-seven; eyes, gray-blue and a trifle Mongoloid, but not the face. His face doesn't look as much like a potato as many Russian faces. It's on the intellectual side—the type similar to your own, Sir Godfrey.

"Forehead high, marked concavity at temples, eye sockets deep, cheekbones high, jaw long. I can give you approximate figures on a facial diagram. Left incisor gold, but that doesn't mean much for a Russian; complexion pale; cleft in chin; nose long; nostrils small; ears about type A; hands delicate; nails well kept; unusually well dressed for a Russian, but that could change. Have an idea he likes good clothes. You see, he came from an academic family."

"Yes, yes," Sir Godfrey said, "we know his background. And now may I suggest you go to Claridges? Enjoy yourself while you may, Briscoe. It's what I always tell my boys."

Jim Briscoe rose and picked up his raincoat. "There's one thing I've been thinking of," he said.

Sir Godfrey frowned, because he always liked to do the thinking.

"It's occurred to me," Jim Briscoe said, "that Barnwelder may never have met Bjor himself. It may be complicated for them to get together. I have a hunch, sir, where they may meet. It might be well to watch the Reading Room of the British Museum."

"Good gracious, why that?" Sir Godfrey said. It showed how much it paid to remember everything.

"He was seen there once before the war," Jim Briscoe said. "It's a sort of shrine, you know, for Communists. If you remember, Marx and then Lenin used to work in the Reading Room of the British Museum."

It was amusing to remember that his hunch about the British Museum had been correct. You could often guess what an individual might do if you had made a study of his personality, and in the last

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few months Jim Briscoe had been giving Bjor and Dr. Barnwelder his full attention. It even paid to recall anecdotes like the one about the man in charge of the Reading Room in the British Museum, who had said that a man named Lenin used to come there every day for several years, carrying his luncheon in a paper bag—a quiet, studious man.

"I wonder," the Reading Room director was purported to have said, "whatever finally became of him."

Whenever he came to London, Jim Briscoe, like all Americans had a sense of homecoming. He had seen London under the grim auspices of the blackout, about a year previous to the cross-channel invasion, when he had been flown from Washington on one of his early missions, involving a delicate piece of sabotage that included a parachute drop into France. Though people were briefed for this sort of thing almost daily in the third floor of a Georgian house not far from Berkeley Square, it was all a new experience to Jim Briscoe at the time.

Now, whenever he was in the vicinity of New Bond Street, the memories of that first visit began to crowd back. He could feel the old tensions and old excitements and, he could admit, an undercurrent of fear. Actually, there had been many things deserving of this fear, and he was glad he had not lost the faculty of being afraid.

He had stayed at Claridges for the few days before his party had moved out to an airstrip. Under the circumstances there had been no reason to save money, and because of association, Claridges had always seemed warm and friendly ever since. Whenever he returned, it seemed to him that Claridges welcomed him back with pleasure and surprise.

Things were very different now from the way they had been in the grim days of air alerts. There was no brick wall on the sidewalk protecting the front door, no blackout curtains for the windows, no crowds of uniformed officers, and no restricted menu. Claridges had undergone all the phases of austerity, and now it was itself again.

Nevertheless, the doorman and the interior made him feel as though he were starting out again on a career with which he was now very familiar. The young man in tails who greeted him when he signed his registration card must have received some sort of briefing.

"I'll show you your rooms, Mr. Briscoe," the young man said. "We are going to do our best to make you comfortable."

He had not asked for a suite, because there was always too much to watch in a suite at Claridges, but it was very kind of whoever made the arrangements. His baggage was there already, and a bottle of scotch, with the compliments of the management. He immediately poured

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out a drink for Mark Cheltman, who had accompanied him.

"And now we'll ring and get some ice for me and soda from the room waiter," Jim Briscoe said.

Mark Cheltman began to laugh, which surprised Jim Briscoe, because in his opinion Mark had a rudimentary sense of humor.

"You're always leery of waiters, aren't you, since that time in Rio?" Mark said. "Jove, you really hit that chap, didn't you? And the knife went right across the room. It jolly near lodged in my thigh, in fact. Don't bother about the waiters or anything, old boy. They're all of them good young chaps who travel with our more important delegations, and don't start poking your nose in the closets. It's all clear, even the air shaft, old boy."

Jim Briscoe had to laugh too. England was always like getting home and at the same time a little different.

"Thanks, Mark," he said, "but I've always looked through my digs, to quote one of your British expressions, myself. It's routine, like brushing one's teeth. You'll excuse me, won't you?"

When the room waiter arrived with ice and soda, Jim Briscoe was still looking at the wiring and turning back the pictures on the wall. Mark Cheltman was amused, but then you never could tell, not even at Claridges.

When Mark Cheltman left an hour later, Jim Briscoe again felt that a weight was lifted from him. There was nothing for him to do until tomorrow forenoon, when he must call again at the offices off Piccadilly. Except for one final moment, the British would be carrying the ball. Jim Briscoe felt almost lonely, until he picked up the foreign-looking telephone from the rosewood writing desk in his sitting room and asked for Miss Edith Olmstead at the Hotel Savoy.

He felt, when he asked, almost the way he had felt when he made a date with a Wren the first time he visited London.

"Hello," Miss Olmstead said. "I was hoping you were going to call me. I've got the loveliest suite. The Savoy is just as fabulous as ever."

You never could tell what someone you met on a boat or a plane would be like upon land, and he wished she had not said "fabulous." Miss Olmstead, like himself, had a suite and this seemed a little fabulous, to use that word again, for the daughter of a real-estate-and-insurance man in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. For just a moment he wondered whether Miss Olmstead too could have been given a suite with the compliments of the management, but he immediately dismissed the thought.

"I hope you can come to dinner tonight and dance afterwards," he said.

"Oh, I'd love to," she told him. "Do please come over as soon as you can. I'm feeling rather lonely.

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It's always like getting home when you get to London, isn't it? But at the same time it's different."

"Yes," he said, "it's different."

"I always love it," she said, "but at the same time I always repeat my past here. I feel shy and a little bit afraid."

"Afraid?" he repeated.

He heard her draw in her breath quickly before she laughed.

"Oh, I only mean I was terribly nervous and excited the first time I was in London," she said, "about going to boarding school in Switzerland."

He thought that there was a slight pause before she mentioned boarding school in Switzerland.

"I know the way you feel," he said. "London is a lonely town, even at the Savoy."

Jim Briscoe, like others in his profession, had made his special list of rules for survival, one of which sounded like the advice doctors so often offered to harassed businessmen: Never take your worries home with you from the office.

It was, of course, impossible for him to apply this rule in its entirety, because some part of one's mind was always on watch; but Jim Briscoe had learned to make the best of every opportunity for partial relaxation, and that evening with Miss Omstead was a classic example.

He observed her long enough to be reasonably sure that she had no integral part in the picture with which he was dealing. By the time they were half through dinner at the Caprice, he was almost positive that the girl was exactly what she said she was—the daughter of parents, comfortably well off, in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, a graduate of Bucknell, with honors in the fine arts, who was traveling for a while in Europe and about to visit friends in Rome before she sought a position as a fine-arts instructor in some girls' college.

He was reasonaby sure that she would not hold such a position long. If there was not some man who wanted to marry her, someone would come along. His subconscious, which he had learned to trust implicitly, told him that he was no longer in danger. That indescribable feeling of something behind him had disappeared at the exact moment someone had tampered with his brief case. There was no cause for worry about Miss Olmstead. He could look at her almost in the way he had once looked at other girls when he was young, before the war and before he had ever thought of stepping on a perilous, lonely path.

"You look well in a black tie," she said, "and you would look just as well in tails. I was terribly afraid you wouldn't."

Her remark was unexpected, but he was pleased by her approval. Considerable thought had been given by several people to the exact cut of his evening clothes. Their

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lines, to keep him in character, were slightly unconventional, but they still displayed basic good taste.

"Some men who look perfectly all right in a business suit look like night-club bouncers when you see them with studs in their shirts," she said.

"Well," Jim Briscoe answered, "some men I know give me that impression no matter what they're wearing."

"You look as though you could throw anyone out of here," she said "but you don't look like a bouncer."

Jim Briscoe laughed. It was the first time in a long while that he had been able to laugh with genuine amusement or that he had been genuinely happy with any girl. She had made him forget, almost, the imponderables that surrounded him.

"I don't want to throw anyone out of anywhere," he said. "I hate people who pick fights."

"Oh," she said, "of course you wouldn't, but I'm sure you'd do all right if someone else did."

"I'd try," Jim Briscoe said.

He was impressed again with the wideness of her eyes. She looked very pretty and young and pleased with life.

"I have the most inquisitive mind," she said. "It always acts up when I'm with someone I especially like. Oh, I'm glad we're having champagne."

"You can be as inquisitive as you want so long as you like me," Jim Briscoe said.

"Of course I like you. All women do, don't they?" she answered.

He had a moment's uneasy memory of his ex-wife and her dentist on the West Coast, and then he thought of his son, safe in a Colorado boarding school.

"Well, no," he said, "not always."

"You're married, of course," she said. "Whenever I begin to like a man, it always turns out he's married."

"I'm not at the moment," he said.

It occurred to him that he had not thought of marrying anyone for a long while, for obvious reasons. But now he had a momentary idea, not serious yet not wholly frivolous, that there could be worse things than being married to someone like the girl across the table.

He thought of a house in the country with dogs and horses, preferably somewhere in Carolina where there was quail shooting. For the first time in a long while he had a sharp feeling of regret that he could not settle down. He knew he would never see much more of Miss Olmstead. There could be no letters, no calls at her house in Bryn Mawr, no following her to Rome, and he was very sorry.

"You're awfully formal, aren't you?" she said. "Do you mind if I call you Jim?"

"Of course," he said. "I can't get

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over the idea that first names are valuable."

"I think so too. And don't call me Edith," she said. "Just call me E —plain alphabetical E, like something in a code message."

"All right," Jim Briscoe said. "And now if you'd like to dance, we might go to Les Ambassadeurs. It is only a street or two away."

They were just outside the doorway on the Caprice when she put her hand on his arm so insistently that he stood still, although he never liked to be silhouetted against lights.

"Look across the street," she said. "There go Doctor and Mrs. Barnwelder."

She was right about the Barnwelders. They were walking ponderously in the direction of the Ritz. He knew they were being followed, but the job was so professional he could not immediately see who was doing the tailing, and then he remembered that they were not his business any longer.

"Oh," he said, "you mean that atomic scientist? I don't see why you take such an interest in him."

"Why, darling," she said, and he was startled when she called him darling, although he knew the word meant almost nothing in her age group. "You must know by now that I'm interested in everything. Don't look so worried. I'm not going to speak to them."

"That's swell," he said. "I flunked physics at Princeton."

"Let's pretend we've always known each other," she said. "I'm getting tired of being curious about you."

The thing to do, Jim Briscoe told himself several times that evening, was to live entirely in the present. The terrace at Les Ambassadeurs had never seemed so pleasant to him. When they arrived, there was still a trace of dusk left in the evening sky. She said she had never been to Les Ambassadeurs, but she seemed perfectly at home in that late Victorian mansion, and she danced beautifully. He had always been fond of dancing. He was glad that he had discarded the idea of carrying a gun, because he could not have done the more complicated steps.

Before midnight she said she would like to see St. Paul's at night. The street lights picked out the devastation of the old city, and he thought of the Temple and the old streets as he had seen them as a boy. They would never be that way again. His caution told him that it was not wise to linger in the vicinity of seed-grown cellar holes, but he still had no premonition of danger. He was sure that he was in the clear that night.

"Oh, dear, it's lovely, and I suppose I should be getting home," Edith Olmstead said.

The lights of the Savoy, after St. Paul's, were unnaturally bright and garish.

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"Well," he said, and he held out his hand. "It's been a wonderful evening, E. You've saved me from being very lonely."

"Oh, don't go away just yet," she said. "Wouldn't you like to come up and talk a while—at least long enough to help me stop thinking about Saint Paul's?"

It was curious to find that his inclinations could struggle so intensely with his common sense. Mr. Henry would have said that it was not the thing to do at all, to go upstairs at the Savoy to a strange suite with a girl you had picked up on a transatlantic plane but suddenly he did not care in the least what Mr. Henry might have thought.

"Why, thanks," he said. "I'd like to very much, E."

He had guessed correctly that she would have one of the small river suites. He followed her through the narrow foyer into the sitting-room with only a single sharp glance at the closed bedroom door. Instead of switching on the lights, she stood beside him in front of the broad window that faced the Embankment.

The darkness of the room made him momentarily tense until she put her hand on his arm. They leaned out to look over London, and he thought again how pretty she was.

"Let's sit in the dark for a while and look out at the river," she said.

Professionally, he wished he could examine the room first, and then he felt ashamed of the thought. He put his hand over hers, and the faint light from the foyer and the lights from the Embankment showed her face turned up toward him.

"Yes," he said, "it's nice here in the dark." And he was thinking of what she had said about knowing each other for a long while.

There had only been a few times since his childhood that Jim Briscoe could call wholly happy. Happiness, he had found, was much more difficult to define than melancholy. It was a capricious mood, which one encountered when one least expected it, and he had found it advisable not to explore its sources.

For example, there were few valid reasons for being happy those few days in London. The whole Barnwelder theory had started as his idea, and he could not avoid believing that his reputation depended upon the accuracy of his guessing. Yet now and then, after that evening at the Savoy, he found himself forgetting the problem.

At first this deeply disturbed him, because he had learned the importance of never forgetting if one wished to stay alive. Also, it made him uneasy that any person could have such an effect on him. He knew, of course, that an immunity to women was vital in his business. It was easy to tell himself that he could take the charm of Edith

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Olmstead or leave it alone, as easily so he could decline a drink; but still there had been several times in those days when he had entirely forgotten that women were the most dangerous elements in Intelligence. Until the case broke, he had been happier in London than he had been for a long while, but it all became a memory when he learned that he had been right about the British Museum.

Sir Godfrey had told him the news three days after that evening at the Savoy.

"Well," he said, "our Doctor Barnwelder has formed a pattern. Odd, isn't it, how human beings form routines, even if they stay in one place for only a day or so? Barnwelder has taken out a card to the Reading Room of the Museum. He was there yesterday morning, and he is there again this minute. It was intelligent of you to have made that suggestion, Briscoe."

Of course there was nothing more natural than for a man of Dr. Barnwelder's caliber to use the British Museum Reading Room during his stay in London. Still, Jim Briscoe was pleased with his guessing. For a second he had the angler's elation at having a fish strike at exactly the spot in the pool where he had guessed it would. Barnwelder was running with the line. It was only necessary now to be patient and careful.

"Does he act nervous or anxious, Sir Godfrey?" Briscoe asked. "Does he seem to be looking for anyone?"

Sir Godfrey pointed the stem of his brier pipe at Mark Cheltman.

"Since you have the matter in hand, I suggest you answer him," he said.

Mark Cheltman spoke respectfully. There were times when the atmosphere of Sir Godfrey's office was exactly like a headmaster's study.

"Everything is as merry as a wedding bell," Mark Cheltman said, "if that is the correct expression."

"Good heavens," Sir Godfrey said. "Have some respect for wedding bells."

"I only mean, sir," Mark said, "that Barnwelder does not seem disturbed by anything at all. Placid old chap, isn't he, Jim? Typical absent-minded professor. Yesterday and today he comes in at nine forty-five sharp. Never looks at anything except his book, never speaks to anyone except to thank the book boy."

Jim Briscoe felt completely satisfied. Dr. Barnwelder was acting exactly as he should have.

"What about the book boy, as you call him?" he asked.

"No fear," Mark Cheltman said. "He's one of our chaps—very keen."

Jim Briscoe knew it was not good form to make suggestions to one's opposite numbers, especially to Sir Godfrey. He waited and did

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not speak until it was obvious that Sir Godfrey expected him to do so.

"Of course you're checking all the card holders?" he said. "And they have my Bjor description in the Reading Room?"

"Naturally," Sir Godfrey said. "And every book that Barnwelder takes is examined. I think we've covered everything, Briscoe."

Dr. Barnwelder moved slowly, but Jim Briscoe had learned that deliberation was a facet of the Barnwelder character. It was ten days after that conversation with Sir Godfrey that the case broke. Jim Briscoe remembered the exact hour. His telephone on the rosewood desk in his suite at Claridges rang at half-past eight.

"Your suit will be ready this morning," a voice said. "May I suggest a preliminary fitting in about half an hour?"

Jim Briscoe remembered, when he set down the telephone, hearing the sound of horses' hoofs on Brook Street, more of a London than a New York sound. London was old-fashioned in many ways. but never backward. He was at Sir Godfrey's office fifteen minutes later, and for once the office had a festive air.

"I think we have him, my dear boy," Sir Godfrey said, and if Sir Godfrey called you "my dear boy," it meant that he was more than pleased.

There seemed very little doubt that they had run down Bjor at last. A man with the name of Max Blenheim had applied for a card only the day before. He had appeared in the Reading Room in the latter part of the afternoon. He had ordered four books, and had piled them eccentrically in front of him, but Dr. Barnwelder had not been in the Reading Room that afternoon.

"But he'll be there at quarter to ten this morning," Mark Cheltman said. "He's as regular as a clock. We'd better be starting now."

"We'll put you up in the gallery among the bookstacks, my dear boy," Sir Godfrey said. "All we need is your identification. I do really feel most happy this morning."

You could take Westminster, if you wanted, or the Tower, or Buckingham Palace, or Whitehall, but none of these buildings, in Jim Briscoe's opinion, were as representative of the spirit of Britain and of the Commonwealth as that sprawling Victorian monstrosity, the British Museum. It's sooty bulk as you approached it from Bedford Square had the imperial arrogance of an older day, and its size at the same time had the generosity and calm of *Pax Britannica.*

In Jim Briscoe's younger days, when he had made summer tours to Europe with his parents, his father had often left him in the museum of a morning, and he had wandered for many hours, half

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lost in its corridors. The strange black lava heads from Easter Island, the feather cloaks from Polynesia, the bas-reliefs from India, still stood out in his recollections, but the achievement of accumulation was what he remembered best. He doubted whether as many diverse objects would ever be gathered into one place again.

Mark Cheltman went ahead of him that morning because there was every reason to be careful, and Jim Briscoe picked up a taxi in the Strand. When it stopped at Bloomsbury Street, the memory of his father was very strong.

"There you are, Jim," he remembered his father saying. "You have it all ahead of you. I'll call for you at the main entrance at twelve."

His father had gone, and a war had come and gone since then, but the entrance hall of the Museum still had the austerity of a conservative, old-line banking house. He did not need to look at the lighted floor plan. The Reading Room, he knew, was straight ahead, but he did not obey his impulse to stride purposefully in that direction. He had learned long ago that any unusual action on the part of anyone was always remembered in some quarter.

It was half-past nine exactly, and so he would be well ahead of Dr. Barnwelder if the doctor kept to his schedule, but he could not tell who else might be there, including some of the sharpest minds in the business. There must be no trace of haste, nor too great an emphasis on purpose. He was the rich young American named Briscoe, knowledgeable and interested in the fine arts. He was wearing his dark flannel suit and his crepe-sole sport shoes, which had been carefully tested for noise, were slightly garish and incongruous.

On entering the museum he had taken off his gray fedora hat, and his face glowed with respectful interest. He paused for an instant and gazed up at the capitals of the stone columns, because strangers entering a building often gaze upward as though afraid the roof might fall.

Well, well, he said to himself, you're here again, Briscoe.

When he thought he had gaped long enough, he walked slowly toward the Reading Room, like a tourist testing old recollections and reluctant to ask the way of an attendant.

There were only a few people in the entrance hall, all of whom, in his respectful enthusiasm at being there, he appeared not to notice. His ability to spot people off the beat was naturally above the average. Except for two men, obviously planted by Sir Godfrey, both dressed in attendant's uniforms, Jim Briscoe could observe nothing out of line.

He walked straight across the marble floor of the foyer and coughed gently so that the silence

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of his footsteps would not be too conspicuous. A frail elderly man in a black alpaca coat was waiting for him, too obviously, Jim Briscoe thought, but then the arrangements were Sir Godfrey's and not his.

As Jim Briscoe approached the Reading Room, the old man moved arthritically along a corridor to the right, and a minute later Jim Briscoe found himself among the stacks behind the Reading Room. He was pleased to observe that the elderly man also wore crepe soles. They both moved noiselessly into position behind one of the doors fronted by false backs of books that opened onto the first gallery. Sir Godfrey's office could not have chosen a better observation point. A small opening had been cut in the door; it gave Jim Briscoe a good view of the readers' tables in the room below.

Although the sight was peaceful, Jim Briscoe felt a surge of excitement. He remembered the huge rotunda and the starlike arrangement of the reading desks, which spread from the catalogue and reference desks in the center. The whole place had the appearance of studious concentration that one associated with any reading room. The day was cloudy, like most London mornings, and the reading lights above the occupied tables shone.

He could even hear the sound of turning leaves and the more decisive thumping of the heavy folio volumes that contained the catalogues of the Museum's more than six million volumes. The place, he noticed, because he was trained to examine exits and obstacles before turning to people, had been spruced up since prewar days. Though the oak woodwork still gave an impression of the great days of Queen Victoria, the dome, arching above the rotunda and one foot wider than the dome of St. Paul's, if Jim Briscoe's memory served him right, had been painted a pleasing blue, and fresh leather tops of the same general shade now covered the reading tables. The room where Marx and Lenin and Charles Dickens had once sat was half filled already with readers, who would have been fascinating to study if Jim Briscoe had only had the time.

He was looking for a single man in the Reading Room, and once he saw him all the other faces blurred to insignificance. There was no possible doubt as to the identification.

Bjor was seated at a table across the rotunda. All the physical details came immediately into focus. He looked older, but not much older. There was not much gray in his hair. It was thinner at the temples. There was the same concavity, the same high cheek-bones and narrow jaw. There was no mistaking the nose and the delicate hands. It was a long way from Dumbarton Oaks, but there was Bjor again.

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Jim Briscoe was annoyed that his heart was beating faster. He looked at his watch. There was still five minutes to go before Dr. Barnwelder was due to appear. As a matter of fact, Barnwelder was three minutes late, and Jim Briscoe, standing frozen, hardly daring to blink, remembered thinking that he would have done the same if he had been Barnwelder. There was nothing more suspicious than completely clocklike precision.

Dr. Barnwelder seated himself opposite Bjor, but as far as Jim Briscoe could see, neither of the men displayed the slightest sign of recognition. Dr. Barnwelder was obviously waiting for the books he had ordered, and the wait, before the attendant finally appeared with four volumes, seemed to Jim Briscoe interminable.

"Thank you," Dr. Barnwelder said, so distinctly and loudly that his voice carried to Jim Briscoe in the gallery.

Jim Briscoe remembered thinking again that Dr. Barnwelder had a pleasant voice. It seemed to him that the voice was unnecessarily loud, but Bjor did not look up. Dr. Barnwelder placed the four books in front of him, piled rather eccentrically—the exact code was unimportant.

They were both excellent at what they were doing down there in the Reading Room. It was so well done that Jim Briscoe could believe that Barnwelder's glance met Bjor's by accident—but of course it was not accident.

The two men had made contact.

The ring was closed, and every detail of the Barnwelder theory was proved in that one second. Jim Briscoe had done what he had crossed the ocean for, and it was time for him to leave the place as casually and unhurriedly as he had come.

The old man was still standing in the bookstacks just behind him. Jim Briscoe nodded to him slowly, and the old man nodded back. It wasn't every day that one could get the details of a perfect spy ring. Jim Briscoe felt a moment's letdown now that it was over.

It could not have been a minute later that he was in the entrance hall. He was halfway toward the doors when he saw a girl in a tailored gabardine suit standing close to one of the pillars. It was Edith Olmstead, and she had recognized him before he could move a muscle.

"Why, Jim darling," she said. "I thought you said that you always slept late in the morning. Whatever are you doing here?"

Jim Briscoe did not need to ask her the same question, because he had seen the astonished half opening of her lips and the momentary dilation of her eyes. He hoped that his face showed nothing, and that his smile was natural. Actually, his surprise was very deep indeed, the deeper because he had discounted

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her. This made him so surprised and so ashamed of himself that for a second or so his thoughts confused themselves with emotion, because it had been a long time since he had been so completely deceived in estimating a personality or a situation.

Now he saw that right from the beginning she had been detailed to keep watch over Barnwelder. She was on guard this minute to be sure that no one had observed the meeting in the Reading Room, and now she had seen him.

He could not avoid a moment's deep respect for her, of the sort that one skilled professional always accords to another. She had been caught off guard herself, he was thinking, because she had been deceived too by the planted paper in his brief case. That explained her surprise. Until the chips were down, they had both been mistaken.

All these thoughts ran through Jim Briscoe's mind as he walked toward her. The main thing, he was thinking, was to show no surprise or nervousness, because logic told him that she had no cause to believe that he had finally found her out. Why should she have, when she had deceived him so long? This was the card he held, but still it was a very delicate situation.

"Why, E," he said, "fancy seeing you here! But now you are here, I only have to make one guess what you're going to do."

His mind was moving more smoothly now that he was beginning to plan his immediate course of action. He could feel amused by the half-puzzled, half-watchful look behind her eyes. He even remembered thinking how very unspoiled she looked. In spite of what he now knew, she still looked like a graduate of old Bucknell.

"You always know all the answers, don't you?" she said. "Just in case I've forgotten, why don't you tell me what I'm going to do?"

Her voice and manner still showed what good friends they had become.

"You're a very unkind girl, I think," he said. "You've been planning to sneak up here and look at the Elgin marbles without me, or else you'd have told me last night."

"It just came over me this morning that I'd like to see the Elgins," she said. "Don't be so hard on me, darling. You sneaked up here yourself, didn't you?"

"It's an old bad habit of mine. I've always loved this place," he answered. "Let's go and see the Elgins."

The situation was very delicate. The British ought to be informed, he knew, but there was no way to do it. The two men from the office had disappeared. The whole net had obviously been lifted at almost the same instant he had left the Reading Room gallery, since there was no use stirring up the smallest trace of suspicion. Then he saw

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that she was laughing, and she seemed honestly amused.

"What's so funny?" he asked.

Before she answered, she linked her arm with his and pressed it possessively against her, and Jim Briscoe could read the thought behind that gesture. As far as she knew, he was the only one who had observed that meeting in the Reading Room. Obviously she was not going to let him go until something could be done about him.

He hoped she did not know that he felt nearly the same way about her. If she gave a single word of warning, the whole combination would be spoiled. He deliberately dismissed from his mind the deep political implications of what had been discovered, and the gains that could accrue if everything could be kept quiet as long as possible.

He knew their minds were as one about that. They were like a happily adjusted married couple as they stepped into the finely lighted room where the Parthenon frieze was exhibited.

"I suppose these were all put in some safe place during the war?" she said.

The horsemen of Phidias had never seemed to him to be so full of life as they were that morning. He wished for one mad moment that he could be a professor of fine arts.

"Oh, yes," he said, "they were in caves in Wales."

"Why, how did you ever know that?" she asked. "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be inquisitive."

"Don't be sorry," he said. "Everybody knows."

Her arm was still linked with his. He was doing his best, of course, to think what he would do if he were she. There was only one main fact. She would be planning to get him out of the way eventually, and in the meanwhile he was reasonably sure that she did not suspect what he knew about her. He knew that she had been shocked when she saw him, because she had been deceived by the brief case, but he was reasonably sure that she still thought of him as a gullible person.

They went over the Elgin marbles carefully and intelligently, because neither of them wished to reveal absent-mindedness or desire for haste. Her enthusiasm for those reliefs did not seem in the least artificial. He was sure that she had a genuine love for line and shadow, and he found himself speaking to her about archaic sculpture, mentioning some of his old favorites.

As he heard his own words, he was able to admire their validity. He wished to heaven that he had a gun now that he was aware again of clear and present danger, but he was reassured by something Mr. Henry had said in his early days at the Bureau.

"Unless you are dealing with underworld triggermen," Mr. Henry had said, "I'm against rod carrying

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as a general rule. When it comes to shooting, everything is usually too far along for it to help, and it's amazing what interesting results one can achieve without a rod, given education and correct coordination."

Jim Briscoe was glad to recall that quickness of hand and eye had been very helpful to him on a number of occasions, now that there was little doubt that he would have to avail himself of his skill in the very near future. After all, you could not go on looking at something indefinitely, even the Elgin marbles.

He noticed that people were beginning to glance at them with friendly amusement. They did not make a bad looking couple, and a casual observer might easily have thought that they were in love. He could not help thinking of a lacy valentine he had once received when he was in the seventh grade in grammar school.

"Two minds with but a single thought," the valentine had read. "Two hearts that beat as one."

Jim Briscoe sighed. "I wish we could stay here all day," he said, "but I don't suppose we can."

"If we did," she said, "we'd get museum fatigue, and I want to remember the marbles nicely, always. Darling, it's been wonderful."

"Yes," he said. "It's meant a lot to me, seeing them with you, my dear."

"Darling," she said, "why don't you take me somewhere to lunch if you're not busy?"

Jim Briscoe heard his voice ring with hearty, bright enthusiasm.

"I don't know why I didn't think of that myself," he said. "There couldn't be a better idea, but it's rather early, isn't it, for tiffin?"

The word "tiffin" sounded rather effective to him, because in his experience only fools referred to lunch as tiffin. He looked at his wrist watch.

"I suppose it *is* early," she said. "What time is it?"

He thought her voice sounded sharper when she asked the time. It was a quarter past eleven. They had spent much longer than he had thought with the marbles.

"We could go to the Savoy," she said, "and have a drink upstairs, and look at the river, and talk until we're hungry." She stopped and smiled at him shyly. "Or have you seen too much of the Savoy lately?"

"I'll never see too much of the Savoy, dear. Never," he said.

It was cloudy when they walked out of the museum and stood on the curb of Bloomsbury Street. A cruising taxi rolled past them, but Jim Briscoe gave no signal.

"Why, Jim," she said and her voice was as sharp as though they really were a married couple, "didn't you see that taxi?"

She would have done better not to have made the remark. Dumb as she may have considered him, she

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could hardly blame him for being discriminating about taxi-cabs.

"I was going to take one from the rank," he said. "It seems fairer, don't you think?"

"Of course it does," she said. "I don't know why it didn't cross my mind."

She undoubtedly had a number of things to think about, and so did he. She reached for his hand and held it tight as their taxi moved down Great Russell Street and threaded through the traffic of Charing Cross Road past Trafalgar Square to the Strand.

"Darling," she said, "I've never had such a good time in London as I've had for the last few days. Do you think you can guess why?"

"It's funny," Jim Briscoe said, "how great minds think alike. No one could have had a better time than I've been having."

He was trying, as he spoke, to get the layout of the Savoy suite clearly in his mind. She was so obviously relieved to be going there with him that there could not be much doubt that she had help available.

Someone standing at the bed room window, he remembered, could see a considerable distance into the rest of the suite. Someone might risk a shot at him from the bedroom, but no one could very well be there when they arrived and on the whole he discounted the idea of shooting. Whatever was going to occur would necessarily be quiet. It might be a knife, except that knifing was messy in a place like the Savoy.

It was strange to be weighing possibilities while he was holding E. Olmstead's hand. It was strange that he could feel a genuine affection for her and a true admiration —but then, he could understand better than anyone else the difficulties under which she was laboring. He was aware more keenly than he had ever been before of her buoyant love of life. Vitality was useful in Intelligence, if you could keep it in control.

When they reached the lift at the Savoy, he was sure that she had given no signal to anyone.

"We could either have luncheon served upstairs," she said. "or go to the Connaught or Claridges."

"Oh, no," he said. "Upstairs by all means."

Inadvertently she had given him a useful piece of information. She had as good as told him that whatever the show might be, it would occur before lunch, not after.

He was still turning this over in his mind while she searched for her key in her handbag. His nerves must have been more on edge than thought, because she startled him when the suite door closed behind them. They were still in the narrow foyer when she turned and faced him.

"Darling," she said, "how about a kiss? I've been dying for one all morning."

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Once again his mind returned to Mr. Henry. There were many dangerous things one necessarily had to face. Mr. Henry had said in one of his first talks when Jim had joined the Bureau. Believe it or not, Mr. Henry had said, getting out of a bathtub in a strange hotel was a very dangerous procedure and kissing a woman was almost its equal.

Jim Briscoe could remember the hearty laughter of the young men when Mr. Henry had made this remark, but Mr. Henry had been serious. You were vulnerable when a woman had her arms around you. She could be holding a knife, a small firearm, or a hypodermic. If she was strong and knew jujitsu, she could always knock you over.

Nevertheless, Jim Briscoe spoke promptly.

"Two minds, dear, but a single thought. E, dear, let me take your purse. You've never looked so beautiful."

She made no objection when he placed her purse carefully on the console table. As it turned out, there was no guile in her embrace. It was a moment of generosity and defenselessness for both of them.

"Darling," she whispered, "I've loved you so."

If Jim Briscoe noticed the past tense, still he was sure she meant what she was saying. She was sorry, and he was sorry too—much sorrier than he thought he would be that things had turned out this way for them.

He had another fleeting memory of Helen, married to her dentist. It had been a long while since he had even thought of caring for anyone. What was that dreadful joke Mr. Henry had made on the evening before he left Washington? That the dentist's life was more boring than his—and as always Mr. Henry was quite right.

"Dear," he said, and he meant what he was saying, "it's not only been, but it still is, wonderful."

She stirred gently in his arms.

"You've always made me feel so natural, so completely at home," she said. "Shall we have a drink? The Elgins have made me thirsty."

Mr. Henry had never needed to detail the problems involved with liquor, the pill and the vial—but, then, as Jim Briscoe had learned, E. Olmstead kept no bottle in the suite. In suggesting a drink she had as good as told him that it would be a room waiter who would do the work. It would be a fractured skull or a Mickey Finn, and he was inclined to believe in the fracture, because it would be quicker.

"Now that you mention it," he said, and he hoped his glance was as friendly as hers, "I could do with a drink myself. I'd love a scotch and a splash."

He hoped that the mention of a splash made him sound stupid, and he was almost sure it did.

"I'll have one too," she said. "Sit down, darling, and I'll give you a cigarette while I ring."

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Her judgment about the chair she gave him was highly academic. It was one of those low, deeply upholstered armchairs from which only a contortionist could rise rapidly. He gathered his feet beneath him and sat as near to the edge as possible, hoping she did not notice. He heard her move behind him.

He hoped she was ringing the bell near the entrance to the foyer, and not searching for some blunt instrument with which to do the job herself, but he could not disturb her by looking. He was relieved when she returned and sat on a small chair opposite him, holding out a pack of American cigarettes. He took one, and his attention relaxed for a moment.

"We've had good times up here, haven't we?" she said.

She was good—professionally at the top—he admitted, but not quite perfect or she would not have used the past tense again. He was glad his hand was steady when he leaned forward to light her cigarette.

"I'm having a swell time right this minute," he told her. "Every moment with you has been wonderful." He drew his breath in slowly and told the truth. "It couldn't help but be, because you're wonderful."

He was surprised to see her lips grow thin and the fresh color leave her cheeks.

"You really mean that, Jim?" she asked.

"From the bottom of my heart," he said.

It was an easy speech to make because it was absolutely true. She did not have time to answer before they heard the click of a passkey in the lock, and then he heard steps behind him, moving through the foyer. They were deliberate footsteps, which indicated that the waiter was a big man.

Her glance had left his. It was concentrated on a point above his head, which told him the height of the waiter's face.

Just as he thought, the room waiter was a big man. After all, great physical strength was desirable if you wanted to get through with one of those jobs quickly.

Jim Briscoe let his hands rest gently on the arms of his chair. He sat relaxed. Everything inside him was tempted, but he did not follow Edith Olmstead's glance.

"Oh, Robert," she said, and her voice sounded husky, "thank you for coming so soon. The gentleman would like a scotch and a splash."

"Thank you, miss," Jim Briscoe heard the waiter say, and the voice, which sounded like that of a rubber in a Turkish bath, indicated that the man was just behind him. "And what will you have, if you please, miss?"

Without turning, Jim Briscoe could tell what was happening, because every noiseless move the man behind him made was reflected in Edith Olmstead's face. Her lips had compressed, and her eyes had narrowed. It would not be a gun or a

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knife; it would either be garroting or a blackjack. He was willing to bet on the blackjack, because the technique was simpler, considering the yielding upholstery of his low chair.

"Oh don't!" she screamed suddenly. "Look out, Jim!"

Actually he had timed the thing correctly in his own mind. He had jerked his body sideways and over the arm of the chair just as the blow came down. He was off his knees and in a crouch before the man recovered.

Jim Briscoe had always prided himself on being good at close work, and if he did say so, his coordination was excellent. There must be no noise and no mess, he told himself, because the situation was very delicate.

As he thought, the waiter was a big man holding a blackjack. Jim had a glimpse of his dress suit and a red, contorted face. The blackjack was half raised for a second try when Jim Briscoe struck the man in the groin.

When the man's body bent forward, Jim Briscoe had the opportunity to draw himself erect and whirl accurately on the ball of his left foot. The heavy neck just above the white collar presented exactly the target he wanted. With all his weight behind the blow, he hit with the edge of his right palm. It was a simple blow, but most effective when delivered correctly, and his timing had been right. Jim Briscoe had struck the man's spinal column just below the point where it joined the skull, and Jim Briscoe knew that the neck was broken. He could tell by the man's short stertorous breathing as he lowered the body softly to the floor.

The girl had not moved. She had not risen from her chair, and he remembered thinking that she had missed a chance. He found himself dusting his hands together gently, an absurd, instinctive gesture. Her handbag was on a small table beside her. He swept it to the floor, beyond her reach.

"That's right," he said. "Sit quiet. Believe me, moving around won't do you a bit of good."

He was glad she understood him. After all, they were both professionals, and they did not need to explain much to each other now that the chips were down.

"I had to scream," she said. "I couldn't bear to have you killed."

When you came to think about it, her speech proved that Mr. Henry's thoughts on women were correct. They could be loyal to a person and an idea simultaneously.

"Don't let it worry you, my dear," he said. "The warning was unnecessary, but believe me, I am very grateful."

"Oh, Jim," she whispered. Her face was very white. "It had to be you or me, didn't it? I never dreamed it would be you until I saw you there this morning."

Jim Briscoe nodded slowly, and

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then he found the package of cigarettes, offered her one, and lighted it.

"I'm afraid it has to be you now," he said. "In a mild way, I hope. You understand that, don't you?"

"Yes," she said. "I know—but if it is all the same, I'd much rather you didn't do it, Jim."

He had never liked her so much as when she made that request.

"You didn't mind so much, did you," he said, "when you fingered me at Gander?" He mentioned the whole thing lightly. She was frightened, and he did not blame her, but she fell in with his mood at once. She was a very high-class operator.

"No," she said, "but that was before I knew you." Her voice dropped almost to a whisper. "Please don't make the arrangements yourself, darling. Get someone else to do it."

"All right," he said, "then I'll use your telephone, my dear." His words were still soft but very cool. "Just smoke your cigarette quietly, and don't do one other thing or I'll chop you down like that goon of yours."

He felt awkward with the English telephone when he gave the number of the office and asked for Mark Cheltman.

"Hello, Mark," he said. "I'm in a bit of trouble at the Savoy," and he gave the number of the suite. "I'm right as rain personally, but you'd better drop over right away with one or two chaps. It might interest Sir Godfrey to come too, if he isn't busy."

Jim Briscoe put down the telephone and prodded the body with his toe.

"I don't know what Sir Godfrey will have in mind," he said, "but you'll find he's a reasonable man."

"As long as you're not the one who does it," she said.

For the first time that reiteration of hers annoyed him.

"Listen," he told her. "You've upset the apple cart and all we can possibly do is buy a day or two now. No matter what is done about you, your people will be bound to get the wind up—but a day or two is something. You ought to tell yourself you've done quite well."

"Yes," she said. "Let's change the subject, shall we?"

But it was no time to change the subject.

"Just take that look off your face," he said. "This isn't Prague or Warsaw. You're going to live, my dear."

"More fools you," she said.

"Yes," he said, "perhaps you're right. You might tell me, because we'll be bound to find out. Where is Miss Edith Olmstead?"

The girl smiled at him, and she looked less tense.

"In Rome," she said. "I kept telling you I was going to visit friends in Rome, didn't I? She left the same day we did, but she left from Baltimore. All she had to do with this

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was to be leaving the country when I needed a cover."

Jim Briscoe sighed, because one could not think of everything.

"You people certainly know how to fake passports," he said.

"Yes," she said, "indeed we do."

He looked at her for a while without speaking. Her face looked harder, and the illusion of innocence was gone.

"I take it," he said, "you were born somewhere near Vienna?"

"Yes," she said, "Vienna."

"Well," he said, "I've never been able to blame the Viennese for anything they do. I suppose you're Moscow-trained."

"Yes," she answered.

"I ought to have known," he said.

She did not answer, and he had a feeling that there was nothing much left to say.

"Well," he said, "you certainly mixed things up for me, Miss Moscow. The boss always tells us to keep away from gals."

"Jim," she said. "I want to tell you something."

"What?" he asked.

"I've never yelled a warning to anyone before—only you, Jim."

Jim Briscoe smiled faintly, because after all there was no use being bitter.

"I told you it wasn't necessary," he said, "but thanks just the same. Miss Moscow."

"I know," she answered. "But please don't forget, I did it just the same. And Jim?"

"Yes," he said.

"Please don't hate me altogether. Please."

He did not have time to answer. There was a knock at the door of the suite and he remembered that the door was locked.

"Get up," he told her. "Walk ahead of me and open that door, and please do it without any post-graduate tricks, Miss Moscow."

Sir Godfrey lighted his pipe as soon as he seated himself to receive Jim Briscoe's report. When crumbs of tobacco cascaded onto the carpet, Jim Briscoe remembered what Mr. Henry had said about smoking.

"Dear me," Sir Godfrey said. "I don't see what else you could have done under the circumstances, Briscoe. So he came in when she rang?"

"They work in pairs quite often, sir," Mark Cheltman said.

"Dear me," Sir Godfrey said again.

"It was my fault, sir," Jim Briscoe said, "not to have spotted her long before."

Sir Godfrey shook his head slowly.

"No, no," he said. "I was not thinking of that point. One always thinks of what one should have done, doesn't one? Of course, I should have given orders for you to stay back in the museum bookstacks until the place closed down at night. Stupid of me, really."

"I wish I'd thought of that my-

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self, sir," Jim Briscoe said. "I suppose I should have."

"Well well," Sir Godfrey said, "things aren't wholly spoiled for us. We'll be able to give them a bloody nose, I think, if she didn't communicate with anyone. We'll have some hours—a day or two perhaps. Start making things secure, Mark."

"Yes, sir," Mark Cheltman said. "We've already begun."

There was no doubt that the British had taken over, and Jim Briscoe was relieved, because reaction was setting in, making him feel drained and tired.

"Briscoe," Sir Godfrey said, "I assume your chief knows what to do under these circumstances."

"Yes, sir," Jim Briscoe said. "All you need do is signal 'Second Situation.'"

"Then I think we have all the facts," Sir Godfrey said, "unless something further occurs to you."

"No, sir," Jim Briscoe said. "I think you have the fill-in. I'm sorry things didn't work out better."

"On the whole I think you did very well indeed," Sir Godfrey said. "But now I think the less you are seen about here the better, Briscoe. I'd leave at once. We'll take care of the young lady and handle the corpse, of course. Big chap, wasn't he? Must have been a good show, Briscoe."

Mark Cheltman laughed gently. "Jim's good with waiters," he said. "Always."

"Mark," Sir Godfrey said, "get him on the Ambassador flight tonight. Well, goodbye. It's a pleasure to have seen you again—pleasure indeed—Briscoe."

Jim Briscoe shook hands with Sir Godfrey and Mark Cheltman. He was wondering, while he did so exactly what they would do with Miss Moscow and how long they would keep her out of circulation. It would depend, of course, on what might turn up now that important arrests were certain to be made.

It might be a long while before she took a plane to anywhere again. But that was not his problem. The worst of it was that he could say nothing to her—not a word of encouragement or regret—in front of the men who watched them. The strange part about it was that he found himself regretting a good deal, without exactly knowing what. Still, the main thing was to live in the present.

"Chin up," he said. "Goodbye, Miss Moscow. Believe me, I won't forget you. Ever."

"Nor I you," she said, and she smiled at him.

He wanted to shake hands with her, but that would have been absurd with the two men watching. When he turned on his heel and picked up his hat, he was reasonably sure that he would neither forget her nor see her again. He was even more sure when he closed the door of the suite behind him.

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Shades of a supposedly superseded sleuth! . . . It was Ellis Parker Butler, the famous American humorist, who invented the Correspondence School criminologist—a small-town paperhanger named Philo Gubb who committeed a slight case of murder on the King's English every time he spoke; and it was Percival Wilde (of beloved memory) who brought the type to its peak of development—in the wonderful series about P. Moran, the Mr. Malaprop of Murder and Mayhem, the Defective Detective De Luxe.

But glory be, the species is not extinct! The Mail Order Manhunter is still with us!

For here we present, in his earliest case on record, a teenage 'tec—Walter (Wally) A. Watts, student by mail of The Watchful Eye Detective School—and young Wally's got a Holmesian head on his shoulders!

Wally the Watchful Eye

by PAUL W. FAIRMAN

The Watchful Eye Detective School
Parker Building
New York, New York

Mr. Walter A. Watts
Lettyville, New York
Dear Mr. Watts:

As President of Watchful Eye, I wish to thank you for your application; also, to congratulate you on your decision to move into the highly lucrative field of private investigation. I was greatly impressed by the enthusiasm your letter revealed and for that reason am rushing you Lesson Number One of the ten lessons that make up the Watchful Eye course.

However, in your haste to become one of us, you neglected to enclose the $25 tuition payment. An oversight, of course, so please send it along by return mail. In the meantime, allow me to assure you that our expert instruction, coupled with your obvious drive and ambition, will assure you swift progress.

Sincerely,

John Hayden, President

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Dear Johnny:

Your letter and the first lesson, *Shadowing the Suspect,* received. Thanks a million, and you were right about my enthusiasm. You were real top-drawer to send the lesson without the loot and I'll get it to you as soon as possible.

You see, I'm clerking in old Tom Barton's grocery store here in Lettyville and old Tom's not exactly loose with the lettuce. But there won't be much delay with the dough because I've got a bonus coming from old Tom for watching the store three weeks ago while he took a two-day trip to Boston.

Now you might wonder why old Tom hasn't kicked in with this cabbage being as it's due me for almost a month. Well, Johnny there's a reasson for that. You see old Tom never gives out any green unless he's prodded plenty and I haven't felt like hounding him because he's having a hard time just now. You see, his wife, old Martha, committed suicide while he was in Boston.

As you can imagine, a suicide in a little place like Lettyville—pop. 3,000—is a real big deal. So old Tom has been long-facing it all over town with everybody squirting out the sympathy like they were spraying him down for fleas. Everybody helping him moan it up with hardly a thought for Martha who did the dutch while old Tom was in Boston.

And she didn't wait long, either. He'd hardly pulled out for the railroad depot before she turned on the gas range in their kitchen and sat down for a farewell snooze right in front of it.

That's how it had to happen because the coroner said she'd been dead the whole two days when old Tom got back and found her there with the place full of gas. Nobody went to see her while he was gone because we all thought she was going with him. That was how it was supposed to be but old Tom said she changed her mind at the last minute. Probably, I guess, so she could do this one last thing without old Tom griping and heckling her.

And now the whole town's on his side because they know him better and besides, a lot of them owe him money, his claws being in real estate and mortgages and everything else along with the grocery store I work for him in. And they didn't know old Martha very well. She kept to herself in their house about a mile out of town and people said she was snooty.

But that wasn't true. I delivered groceries out there and met her several times and she was real nice. I think old Tom just kept her there by never giving her a dime for duds and she was ashamed to socialize in the sloppy sister smocks and socks he said were good enough for anybody.

And so, Johnny old man, that explains why I'm a little tardy with the

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tuition. But I know everything costs money these days and I'm going to lean a limb against old Tom tomorrow and bust out the bonus which I've got coming.

In the meantime I'm cramming like crazy, shadowing suspects all over the place until I've hardly got time to pitch any pash with Pearl. Pearl's my girl. She works at the local utility company and I'm planning to put the handcuffs on her as soon as I finish your course and get my license and come through on a couple of big cases. But I've got to really roll because I'm already 17 and I want to have an office by the time I'm 21 with a few ops on my payroll so I can sit back and mastermind their moves and have more time for Pearl.

Yours in a hurry,

Wally Watts

The Watchful Eye Detective School
Parker Building
New York, New York

Mr. Walter A. Watts
Lettyville, New York
Dear Walter:

Your letter received and I am sending along Lesson Number Two in the series—*The Art of Obtaining Information Indirectly*—even though the check you enclosed was to the amount of only $7.40. My better judgment tells me to withold the lessons until the total tuition is forthcoming as per contract. But one seldom encounters a push and ambition such as yours so I am forced to stretch a point, knowing you will remit the entire amount as soon as Mr. Barton gets around to paying you your bonus.

In the meantime, please allow me to suggest a little restraint in your activities relative to the course. "Shadowing suspects all over the place"—as you put it—can lead to unhappy complications, what with your lack of experience and the suspects being under no suspicion whatever. Therefore I suggest that you confine yourself to the academic aspects of detection as set forth in the Watchful Eye course, avoiding practical application for now.

Cordially,

John Hayden, President

Dear Johnny:

I'm afraid you got the wrong idea from my last letter—about the bonus from old Tom covering all the tuition. Old Tom paid up when I prodded him but the bonus was only five bucks—I told you he was tight

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with the tips—and I hadn't figured on that to finish off the finances with you. As a matter of fact, I'm peddling my pig to pay the balance. I live on a small farm out of town with my parents and this pig was the runt of the litter and got the short shake on everything. So Dad gave him to me and I bottle-babied him up to a shoat. Now I'm selling him to Frank Gilmore, a nearby farmer, to clean up our contract.

As to the other part, don't worry about a thing. I've stopped shadowing all and sundry and am concentrating all my skill on old Tom. Because here's a hunch right out of the hat, Johnny, and I know you'll keep it confidential—I'm dead sure old Martha didn't commit suicide. Old Tom gave her the gas himself. So it's murder and I don't know why I didn't figure it before. If you were here and could take a gander at the ghoul, you'd catalogue him for a killer right away. Low, slanty forehead. Beady little eyes. A scowl he puts on every morning like his pants.

Oh, he's the criminal type all right and I'm giving him my undivided attention. Of course, I do need a little more shadowing experience. Old Tom made me realize this when he turned around the other evening and said, "Wally, I'm getting tired of banging my heels against your shins every time I stop short. Can't you find your way around town any more without a guide?" Right away, I soaped him real soft and he isn't suspicious, but as I say, I guess I need a little more experience.

And cracking this case won't be easy. Old Tom's probably got the ticket stubs to show he was in Boston all the time. But don't worry. I'll amputate his alibi and keep you posted.

Meantime, I'm studying Lesson Number Two—learning how to obtain the info on old Tom.

The best,

Wally

The Watchful Eye Detective School
Parker Building,
New York, New York

Dear Wally:

Even though you sent only $4.20 in lieu of the total balance due, I'm rushing you the next lesson—all of them up to and including Lesson Number Six which I beg you to read carefully. Even its title—*Logic: The Basis of Successful Detection*—should be enlightening. This lesson brings out basic truths—that there is no such thing as a criminal type from a physical standpoint. Some of the finest people alive have slanty foreheads; beady eyes may indicate an abnormal optical condition but nothing more. And if we arrested all the scowlers in this world there

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wouldn't be enough of us left to feed them.

So read Lesson Number Six carefully and stop annoying poor old Mr. Barton. He no doubt has enough to contend with already.

Sincerely,

Johnny

Dear Johnny:

About the $4.20—I sold my pig all right and delivered him and made off with the moola. But that night he stymied his new sty and then funneled out under Mr. Gilmore's fence and hiked home. That's how pampering pig pays off. Hand-feed one and he's yours forever. So Mom made me give Mr. Gilmore back his dough.

But don't worry. I went right out and pressured Pete Polichek, a real pal, into buying my old bike. He's paying the price tomorrow.

Also, thanks for all those lessons in one big lump. They help because I'll get to be a real clever op just that much sooner. But I haven't got Lesson Number Two, about obtaining information, down quite pat yet. I know I'm a little rough in this department because Mr. Ingalls, the insurance man hereabouts, almost saw through my efforts. He said, "Wally, whether or not Tom Barton had a life insurance policy on Martha is none of your business. A man's insurance program is confidential and an agent wouldn't get much business if he talked about his client's coverage."

But that info wasn't really too important. I'm about ready to close in. Old Tom is scowling harder and his eyes are getting beadier every day.

The best,

Wally

The Watchful Eye Detective School
Parker Building
New York, New York

Dear Wally:

Look, old pal, I'll level with you. This isn't a big operation I'm running. The address is just a mail drop and I do it all from my furnished room on Sixth Avenue. So you can see I'm just a young fellow like yourself, trying to better myself and make an honest buck—so please lay off Mr. Barton!

If you want to get sued for your shirt and maybe thrown in the clink it's okay, but my lawyer says I could get the works too. Old Tom might extend his coverage to include me when he gets around to suing for libel or maybe false arrest and heaven knows what.

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Anyhow, my lawyer says I could be held legally liable along with you, the way you're probably sounding off up there. So please—*please!*—do me a favor and go back to your pigs and groceries. And forget the balance you owe me—the last few lessons are on the house.

Desperately,

Johnny

Dear Johnny:

I'm going to give your school a big boost, old pal. You can use my name and picture in your advertising and get a lot of business. An ad in the big magazines that would say something like—"After Two Watchful Eye Lessons I Nailed My Boss For Murder."

Because that's about how it happened. Old Tom confessed to everything. He did old Martha in with a few whiffs of gas *before* he went to Boston to establish his alibi. Then when he got back from Boston he turned the gas on for a few minutes to smell up the place, opened the windows, and ran out yelling for help.

Of course none of it could have been proved unless old Tom confessed, even with the twenty-five grand policy on old Martha, because everybody figured him to be a solid citizen. But he did confess and that's that. My first case is all wrapped up, signed, sealed, and delivered! And you can go ahead and put that ad in the magazines.

The best,

Wally

121 Sixth Avenue
New York City

Wally, Old Pal:

It's not fair to leave me hanging this way. I know darned well old Tom didn't break down and confess just because you asked him to. Things don't work out that way in this business. You had more on him than you told me. So let me in on it and then maybe I'll be able to sleep nights again.

Johnny

Dear Johnny:

It was that logic lesson you sent that steered me right. Knowing old Tom as I did, it wasn't logical that he'd waste two days' gas on a ten-

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minute job. And I knew he wouldn't risk a fire by leaving a gas stove going for two whole days.

So Pearl, she's my girl, being employed at the utility company made it easy to check old Tom's gas bills. They always ran around $3.00 a month, give or take a dime. Forty-eight straight hours last month would have shoved it up around 80¢ or $1.00 more than usual. But old Tom's bill for last month read the usual—this time, $3.05.

So old Tom could shill the sheriff and con the coroner all right, but he couldn't make a monkey out of the gas meter. Or maybe he forgot that everything costs money these days, even murdering old Martha.

I'm enclosing a snapshot for that ad you'll want to run like I said. The one on the left is Pearl, my girl. She says hello.

All the best,

Walter A. Watts
(the A is for Alert)

COMING ATTRACTIONS . . .

Watch for *NEW* stories by

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a new story by

WADE MILLER

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**WADE MILLER**
TITLE:	***The Memorial Hour***
TYPE:	Psychiatric-Crime Story
LOCALE:	United States
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*There is only one way to describe this fascinating story: it is diabolically clever—and unputdownable . . .*

JACKIE, TO MY ANNOYANCE, MADE his first appearance in my office at three o'clock on a Thursday afternoon.

For the past year I had kept that particular time open for meditation since it was the hour that my wife Helen met her death in the automobile accident. Not even my receptionist knew that these weekly periods were memorial in nature; I let her believe I was taking a mental coffee break.

Nor was this a deception, for a psychiatrist can only absorb so much of other people's problems before he feels the need to clear his mind. And in the year since Helen died, I had been working very hard—burying my sorrow in my practice so to speak.

Consequently, I was disturbed to see a new patient usurping the hour that I considered my own private affair. Though I had no choice but to make the best of it, I intended to reprimand Linda, my receptionist, for her thoughtlessness with the appointment book. As it turned out, I became so caught up in the abnormality of the case that I never did correct her.

My new patient, a virile young man, acted as if he realized his presence was unwelcome. He slouched in the big leather chair opposite me, fixed his eyes on the wall above my head, and read aloud my credentials in a mocking voice. "'Know all men by these presents that John Kermit Conover, having completed the studies prescribed by

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law . . .' Oh, surely that must give you godlike powers, Dr. Conover."

"Not at all." No need to take offense; many frayed personalities react defensively to the analyst at first. "The diplomas merely demonstrate that I've had some seven years of certain special training. I'm only another man, like yourself."

"No," he said quickly. He was strangely anxious. "No, we can't be anything alike." In appearance, at least, he was right. He had the smooth athletic grace of youth, the good looks of health and eagerness, and he seemed expensively well-dressed, while I . . . well, I am now fifty-three, as conservative and quiet and gray as my office walls.

"Suppose we begin with your name," I suggested.

He relaxed into his former arrogance. "Jackie Newman?" he asked with a smile. I had no doubt that it was fictitious, not that this would be especially unusual. "You call me Jackie. I'm afraid we're going to see a lot of each other."

"All right, Jackie. I hope I may be able to help you. However—"

"Look, you've got it framed there on the wall that you're a psychiatrist. You solve people's problems, don't you?"

"Not exactly. Everyone must solve his own problems. My job is to help you uncover and understand what your problem really is. Then you supply the therapy."

"Oh, nice setup," Jackie snorted. "You get the fee while I do the work."

"It's significant that you look at it that way. Do you often have feelings of being cheated?" He stared at me angrily but didn't answer. "You see, as a detached observer, I'm frequently able to detect what the patient is too emotionally bound up in to see for himself. Then I'm able to help."

Jackie dropped his head. "You can't help me," he muttered. "Nobody can. I already know what's wrong with me."

"Then let's talk about it."

"I'm afraid," he said simply. His face, free of the taut lines of arrogance, turned soft and childlike. "Unless something stops me, I know I'm going to do something bad."

"How do you mean—bad?"

"You know," His right hand twitched in a small clawing gesture. "Something violent—hurt somebody."

I reassured him that the urge to violence is imbedded in us all. It is better that the patient not think himself wholly unnatural. "Now, have you ever done anything violent, Jackie?"

"No. Not yet. But lately—well, I've been taking things, stealing . . ."

"What sort of things?"

He folded his arms, as if hugging something tightly against his chest. "Oh, things." He kept his eyes on the upright desk pen in

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front of me. "Nothing I actually need. But I wanted to—I get this wanting feeling inside that makes me keep taking them, more all the time."

I tried to probe deeper but with no results. What were his emotions at the time of the act? How did he feel about it afterward? I knew that the nature of the stolen objects would provide a key to his compulsion, but Jackie kept sliding away from the subject. "I'm not worried about the stealing!" he finally burst out petulantly. "It's the other thing—what I told you before."

"You believe that theft is the stepping stone to something worse, is that it?"

"Well, I keep getting urges, like I was foaming inside. Like just taking things isn't enough. Like there's something even better I could do."

"Can you give me an example?"

All he gave me was a knowing smile. Nor would he admit to any dreaming, when I took that tack. Psychiatry is the only branch of medicine where the patient will conceal his symptoms, hide them even from himself. But the outstanding fact that Jackie had come to me at all was encouraging, so I said, "Let's go about it another way. Tell me about yourself."

He related his history with some pride. It was a rambling discourse and the more I heard, the more dead certain I became that he was making it up as he went along. Although totally alone in the world now, he claimed to have come from a wealthy family upstate, to have served with distinction in the army —"I got the Purple Heart twice"— and, following this, to have pursued several vocations, among them automobile racing and uranium prospecting. In view of his youth, his story sounded somewhat incredible.

He must have sensed my disbelief because he broke off abruptly. "How do you like it so far?" he demanded. "Are you jealous?"

"Let's say that you've raised certain questions in my mind."

"Well, they'll have to wait," he said bruskly, and rose. "Either I'll see you next week or I won't. I'm like that."

Not until after Jackie was gone did it occur to me that I'd failed to tell him that this particular appointment hour was inconvenient. Then, examining my own reactions, I decided that my omission was intentional: I wanted Jackie to return. He displayed, bad manners and all, possibilities that gripped my interest beyond the cloudy merits of his case.

My receptionist came in. "Doctor, Mrs. Greer has cancelled out on her four o'clock. Some unexpected company. She hoped you wouldn't mind."

"It suits me fine," I told her. "That last patient gave me a splitting headache."

"I'll get you some aspirin," she

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said, instantly solicitous. I often wondered what prompted Linda to choose to work for a psychiatrist; she is such a completely uncomplicated personality. A pretty brunette, her buxom femininity and animal vitality sometimes struck me as incongrous amid the neuroses and psychoses of my practice, as if she were moving cheerily among the dead. Yet she was efficient enough and though not a graduate nurse, she fulfilled many of a nurse's functions. "By the way, doctor, I was wondering—since we don't have anybody else coming in today—if I could get away a little early. It's our anniversary and Ed and I were planning to have dinner in town and maybe go to a show."

"Anniversary? Has it been a year already?"

"No, just six months." Linda giggled. "It probably sounds silly to you—but we're still so darn thrilled about being married . . ."

"Don't apologize for being happy," I said. "So few people are."

I thought about Jackie quite a bit during the next week, though I was by no means sure I would ever see him again. However, he appeared on schedule the following Thursday. This time he was sullen and less communicative, except to admit that he was still stealing "things."

In his depressed state he had either forgotten or discarded his previous account of his life; what little he would tell of his background varied greatly from before but sounded to me more probable. The one solid nugget of information I uncovered was that Jackie had briefly attended the same university as I, but I was unable to exploit this common experience to establish the rapport I desired.

He had quit school out of boredom, and he mumbled something about the girls there that I didn't catch and he wouldn't repeat. It included the phrase "sweaters and bare legs," and I surmised privately that his trouble was sex-centered but he wouldn't respond to that line of questioning either. Nor would he speak at all of the seven-year period following college, muttering, "Why talk about it? It's all over." Or—his favorite form of dismissal—"It isn't important."

The consultation left me somewhat despondent, partly the gloomy contagion of his own mood but mostly because I felt I was getting nowhere.

Yet the following week Jackie surprised me by bringing with him in a shopping bag the articles he had stolen. They bore out my first theory as to the center of his trouble. The "things" turned out to be brassieres—most of them fancy with lace or bright in color—and he was compulsively explicit as to when and where he had taken each one. Some had come from clotheslines in various parts of the city, but many of them were new with price tags still attached.

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"Why are you telling me this today when you wouldn't before?" I asked.

"Because I'm finished." Jackie was jubilant, pacing back and forth excitedly, refusing to settle in the patient's chair. "I'm not going to steal any more of them. It's just a matter of deciding to exercise self-control."

"Have you ever considered—despite this theft aberration, which is minor—that you might be under too complete control? That you might be hiding from yourself something of real importance?"

He turned to me with a hurt expression. "You don't think I am cured."

"You may be. But it's seldom that easy, Jackie."

"You'll see," he promised, earnest as a five-year-old. "I brought this stuff up here so you could give it back to the people I took it from."

I agreed, though I knew it was an impossible task. To return all that stolen lingerie to its rightful owners would provoke questions that I wouldn't be able to answer. So I simply pressed the shopping bag into the bottom drawer of one of the filing cabinets that stood in the anteroom to my office, intending to dispose of its contents at a more convenient time.

Linda discovered Jackie's loot before I remembered to do so, however. When I entered my office one morning, she was standing in the anteroom, peering astonished into the shopping bag. "Doctor, what on earth are these things?"

I explained, telling her a little about the patient but without mentioning his name of course. She laughed. "Isn't that ridiculous? Stealing stuff like this!"

"To you, perhaps," I said, a trifle annoyed. "But I can assure you it's deadly serious to him. Somewhere there is a deep and terrible rift in his personality."

Jackie never mentioned the brassieres again and as far as I could tell his thefts had stopped. He proudly gave the credit to his newfound "self-control" but it seemed to me that his interests had merely passed on to other, and possibly more sinister, areas. Whereas he still refused to fill in the seven-year gap in his life, he suddenly began talking at great length about women he knew, or had known. All of them, according to him, fell over themselves with eagerness to win his favors.

Finally, as both his loquacity and the affairs became repetitious, I suggested that he might be indulging in fantasy.

Jackie laughed heartily. "I told you that you were jealous of me, didn't I? Just because I've got what it takes. Here you're supposed to treat me and you don't even see how stodgy you yourself are."

I said gently, "You may not believe it, but I was young once myself."

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"Not really, I'll bet. I'll bet you always had your nose buried in some book. I'm different. Why, before I quit college . . ." And he was off again, describing with relish an erotic and possibly fictitious escapade. On the other hand, it was also conceivable that he was telling the truth; he was both handsome and aggressive enough. There was always that nagging doubt in my mind as I tried to pin down which was the real Jackie.

Interspersed with his armorous reminiscences was an infrequent moment of insight into Jackie's present activities. I learned that he had bought a pair of binoculars and was spending much of his time in the big park near my office. He was watching people—he called it "studying" them.

"Nothing wrong with that," he said when I questioned him about it. "I'm expanding myself. Have to share the world with my fellow human beings, so I might as well get acquainted with them." He gave me a quick crooked grin. "The other day I watched your Linda, sitting on the grass, eating lunch out of a paper sack. I guess she was tanning her legs. Pretty jazzy for you, having something built like that around the office all day."

It was poor clinical practice but I had to become stern with him at that point. "Linda's an extremely nice girl and happily married. You'd better forget about Linda."

Jackie only smirked. In his exhilarated moods he enjoyed trying to put me on the defensive, to reverse momentarily our relationship. But he was indignant when I suggested he give me the binoculars. He flatly refused. Yet, although I didn't press the point, at the conclusion of the session I discovered that he had left them behind on my desk. I stored them away with the stolen lingerie in the filing cabinet.

During the next few weeks the collection grew steadily. Detailed drawings and floor plans of buildings, maps and written schemes for various adventures upon which he had decided to embark. Most of these were juvenile fancies but I was concerned with the recurring motif of aggression. And no matter how fanciful, all these plans represented sex substitutes—as did his actions at this time—and I was faced with the increasingly difficult job of separating what Jackie actually did from what he claimed he had done.

First, he mentioned smashing a few windows here and there. Then he recounted entering some empty houses under construction in a new tract. From this he passed on to breaking into occupied dwellings, mostly apartments in the downtown section where women lived alone. These illegal entries were accomplished in the early morning hours and he would, he claimed, creep into the bedroom and watch the sleeping woman for a while

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and then stealthily depart without awakening her.

"Aren't you afraid of being caught?" I asked him.

"I'm not afraid of anything," he boasted. Most of the time he was openly scornful of his fellow human beings, particularly those in authority, such as the police—or me, whom he also equated with authority. Yet Jackie occasionally underwent periods when he seemed genuinely ashamed of his behavior and he would draw up solemn "commandments" for virtuous living which he soon broke or evaded.

I began watching the newspapers to see if any of his presumed exploits were mentioned. They were not, but this didn't necessarily prove anything one way or the other. Breaking windows—or even knocking down a little girl on a lonely street, as he claimed to have done once—were probably too minor to make the papers.

Then one day I saw an item that sent a chill through me. A divorcee, returning home late one evening, surprised a prowler in her bedroom. They scuffled and she was wounded in the shoulder, apparently with an ice pick. Her assailant had fled.

I felt an icy certainty that Jackie was the attacker. As he had feared from the first, he was progressing steadily from small aberrations to larger horrors. And it troubled me constantly that I could find no way to get inside him and discover the truth about him.

Sure enough, Jackie described the attack at our next Thursday afternoon consultation. He was pale and frightened of what he had done. His hand shook as he turned over to me the ice pick that he said was the weapon. Then I was faced with a terrible dilemma, undoubtedly the most tortured problem of my career. On one hand, it seemed plain that Jackie Newman was dangerous to society and it was my duty to turn his case over to the police. On the other hand, before me sat a patient in agony whom police methods could neither help nor cure. While over all, like a fog, lay the vast complication that Jackie might just as easily have read the same news story as I and fitted it neatly into his own life picture. So wherever the truth lay hidden, there also was my duty.

Linda noticed my extreme depression. "Doctor, you've been working much too hard. Why don't you get away for a while? A vacation would do you good."

"I'd like to, Linda, but I'm afraid this is no time for it. I'd be afraid I was running away. There's a case I have to see through."

"Oh, surely it could spare you for a week."

"Not this patient. I'm hoping I can pin it down to hysterical fantasy—that the patient's sustained emotional conflict is causing him to retreat from his real self. But so far

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I can't get through to the *actual* patient, as it were."

I had made my decision. Jackie was my responsibility. I was aware that I must avoid the professional trap of becoming too absorbed in my patient, lest I identify with him rather than remaining in detachment. Already, I felt, I was showing an unwarranted fatherly concern.

I found hints of other dangers too, both to myself and to others. Jackie was evidencing classic symptoms of megalomania of which the ultimate expression, of course, is murder. He now talked about going armed "because my life is in danger"—though, as far as I could tell, he did nothing about this. He finally admitted to nightly dreaming—dreams of himself as the master criminal, of manipulating vast conspiracies, of running rampant in a big black car.

His periods of contrition were less frequent and he became more openly suspicious of me and my methods, ironically at precisely the time when he needed me more than ever. When I suggested the use of pentathol to aid us in getting at the roots of his psychosis, Jackie flatly refused.

He scowled when I asked his reasons. "You know why."

"Not when it might help. Pentathol merely relaxes the mind's subconscious defenses. That's why it's sometimes called the truth serum." I explained the value of confession in insight therapy. "Almost all of us practice some form of confession as a natural safety valve. A child uses his mother, a husband his wife or vice versa . . . why, before my wife died, I often made her my confessor to get rid of whatever repressions I might have."

Once again Jackie's refuge lay in trying to turn my words against me. "People confess because they're afraid, right?"

"That's a very rough generalization."

"Why don't you admit that you had to make a full report every night to your wife because you were afraid of her?"

"Because it wouldn't be true."

"There's the mind's subconscious defenses speaking," Jackie scoffed. "*You're* the one who needs the truth serum, Doctor. Maybe you'd find out things. Like maybe these meditation periods that I've been butting into are really celebrations that your wife is dead, and now you're free."

"Free to do what?" I inquired wearily. My headaches were beginning earlier these days.

"Free to hire that bosomy brunette, for one thing. Your wife wouldn't have let you play games like that in her day, would she?" It struck me that even Jackie's grins and grimaces were becoming more depraved as time went by. "I study people, too, Doctor. I know what goes on."

Linda. Jackie's thoughts revolved

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more and more about Linda these days. His growing interest in my young receptionist seemed to me like an ominous line on a fever chart, climbing steadily upward.

At first, there had been only veiled remarks which led to more open discussion, no matter how I attempted to discourage the subject. Then began the letters—long pencil-scrawled communications addressed to her, warped forms of ordinary love letters that were born in indecency and grew into obscenity. But none of them was mailed or delivered to her; each was handed over to me first and was added to Jackie's dossier, which by now was rather extensive. Furthermore, Jackie made no effort to approach Linda personally, perhaps because I warned him severely against any such attempt.

I also warned Linda, but more obliquely. I mentioned that there seemed to be a rash of prowlers molesting women these days, adding lightly. "But I don't imagine your Ed leaves you by yourself very much, Linda."

She laughed. "I'll say not. Ed's home every evening. I keep telling him I didn't get married to be alone."

I was relieved. With her husband to protect her at home and with me to keep a sharp eye on her during office hours, I didn't believe that Linda was in any particular danger even if Jackie should prove to be a violent case. I was still convinced that he was an hysterical fantast, a half personlity living in a dream world of juvenile aspirations and compulsive lies.

Then, for a time, we seemed to make real progress. Jackie reverted to his earlier desire to be helped. Although he sat puzzled and uncommunicative, he listened attentively to me. He continued to make his sweeping resolutions for better behavior but now he apparently kept most of them. He confessed to prowling aimlessly through the city streets at night but without the accompanying acts of petty vandalism. He admitted that he still experienced the same wild urges but now he took a morose pride in standing up to them. Most significant of all, he didn't speak of Linda as frequently, and he wrote no more erotic letters.

For the first time I began to believe that the battle had turned, that Jackie was going to come home to himself.

One Thursday afternoon he appeared in a highly agitated state. For a full half hour he sat fidgeting in the big leather chair, saying nothing, not looking at me. All at once he blurted, "Worthless little tramp—she deserves anything that happens to her!"

I knew instinctively whom he meant but I had to be sure. "Linda?"

"Oh, I see things. Last night, through her window, she and that

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stupid ape she's married to. Kissing and hugging and fooling around—not even decent enough to pull down the blinds."

"Jackie, you promised—"

"It makes you sick." His hands were clenched together in fury. "Her trotting around in just her slip and that moron grinning at her while all the time it should have been me in there." He added incongruously, "They had steak for dinner, too."

I listened despondently as Jackie raged on, describing in painful detail the actions of Linda and her husband. He had spent the entire evening crouched on the fire escape outside their apartment, watching and listening. Finally I interrupted him.

He didn't act as if he heard me. "Her slip, it had a lace heart over the left breast. The prettiest thing you ever saw—so pretty it made you want to tear it."

"Jackie, listen to me! This has got to stop!"

He looked sly. "I didn't do anything. Why are you getting so excited?"

I said angrily, "What you did do was bad enough!" I had to make an effort to calm myself. "You're intelligent, Jackie—you know yourself where this sort of behavior is leading you. I've believed that, between the two of us, we could solve your problems. But any future actions of this sort and I'll be forced to get outside help."

He rose and came to stand over me, eyeing me oddly. "But I don't think you really want to cure me, Doctor. I think you rather enjoy me."

Then he left.

I spent the rest of his consultation hour staring at the telephone, wondering again if I should call the police and put an end to the whole business. But I couldn't bring myself to lift the receiver. One more conference, I decided; then I'll know for sure. And I was absolutely certain, without reason, that Jackie would return.

He came back on schedule the following Thursday, his manner serenely confident. I was concealing my own nervousness. I said, "Jackie, have you been thinking about our previous conversation?"

He smiled as he walked around my desk to stand over me again. "Oh, yes."

"Then I gather that you've come to some decision."

"Yes, I've finally made up my mind. I'm going to reform—right afterward."

"Afterward?" It hurt my neck to look up at him. "After what?"

"After I take care of Linda. That's what I've needed all along to get the evil out of my system. Then I'll be able to be good forever and ever." His voice rang with relief and boyish exuberance. "It's such a simple cure."

I could scarcely believe I'd heard

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his fantastic suggestion. "Jackie," I whispered, "this is all wrong. How can you even think of—"

Just this one last bad thing," he announced. A trace of saliva gleamed at one corner of his mouth. "Then everything will be finished. You know I *have* to do it, Doctor. So you call her in here and let me get it over with." He began to unbutton his shirt.

"No!" I said. "This has gone far enough! Sit down and make yourself think how impossible this is!"

But it'll be so easy. I'm stronger than she is—just as I'm stronger than you are. And we're all alone here."

That much was true. At this moment Jackie was the master. But I made a last plea. "Jackie, at least think what you're doing to yourself! Think of the consequences! Think what they'll do to you!"

"I've got to find peace," he said solemnly. "They'll understand that when I tell them. Now let's see—where did we put that ice pick?"

I found myself unable to move. Through a faint haze I watched him pull open the filing cabinet drawer and rummage for the ice pick. I understood exactly what he intended to do, but I was powerless to interfere. As in a nightmare, I seemed to have no conscious will of my own. Jackie dominated everything. I saw him push the buzzer to summon Linda and I waited for the terrible act that was to come.

The door opened and she appeared, a smiling healthy picture of normality in her white uniform. "Yes, Doctor?"

"Come all the way in," Jackie said huskily. "I've been waiting a long time."

She took a step forward, then her eyes widened incredulously as Jackie prowled toward her. "What's the matter?" she asked, backing away. "What are you doing with that ice pick?"

She screamed as Jackie sprang at her, hugged her close, then began tearing at the open throat of her uniform. She was stronger than Jackie had expected—she was fighting for her life. She got hold of his right wrist and with both hands held the sharp spike away from her breast while Jackie's free hand pounded her face and clawed at her dress. And through it all I remained paralyzed with horror, watching the brutal assault.

Linda, writhing to escape, slipped and sprawled to the floor at Jackie's feet. Jackie bared his teeth in a wild outburst of triumph. He raised the ice pick for the final blow. Linda shrieked for mercy, calling his name.

But it was not Jackie's name she called. It was my name.

"Doctor Conover!" she screamed. "For God's sake, don't kill me!"

Abruptly the piercing headache clamped down on me again and I was no longer a spectator to attempted murder. I was the attacker. I stared down in horror at the ice

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pick in my hand, at Linda huddled at my feet. Not Jackie Newman but Dr. John Kermit Conover.

I was Jackie.

No wonder that I had been so completely absorbed in his "case," since it was my own. Linda, screaming my name, had broken through the barrier of my lifelong repressions and I could see the terrible significance of the identity I had invented, the "new man" I longed to be.

Jackie—everything I never was. Now I could look back on my empty life—the vise of early marriage at college, the seven years of medical training under the spur of Helen's ambition. Not even Jackie, the amoral dream figure of myself, had been willing to speak of those seven years. "He" had not been afraid of the truth. I hated Helen. I was glad she was dead. But she died too late for me to change my life and enjoy my new freedom.

Standing there, shaking with the pain of revelation, I wasn't aware that Linda had scrambled away. She came back quickly with half a dozen men from the surrounding offices. They approached me cautiously but they had nothing to fear. I dropped the ice pick and fell to my knees before them.

And now I sit here in a strange locked room, awaiting the tenth—or is it the hundredth?—visit by a trio of men who will question me about the rift in my personality. I know all the words. Hysterical fantasy . . . self-suggestion . . . sustained emotional conflict . . . It doesn't matter. Jackie will never return.

And neither will I.

There's a new RANDOM HOUSE MYSTERY every month. This month's:

A story of murderous revenge by

Kyle Hunt

TO KILL A KILLER

Just published. $2.95 at your bookstore

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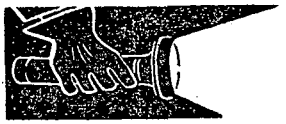

BEST MYSTERIES OF 1959

recommended by ANTHONY BOUCHER

A year of far too many mysteries (over 400) still had at least its share of delights—both surprises and reassurances. Matters started off well in January with the hardcover debut of the 87th Precinct, followed later by two more novels in the same inventive and exciting series:

KILLER'S WEDGE; 'TIL DEATH; KING'S RANSOM, *by Ed McBain*
(Simon & Schuster, $2.95 each)

The comparably excellent series dealing with rookie state trooper Ralph Lindsey produced two novels starting in January:

THE END OF VIOLENCE; SEVEN STEPS EAST, *by Ben Benson*
(Mill-Morrow, $2.95 each)

(And in April came the tragic news of its creator's death.)

February brought a volume of distinguished British short stories, all from EQMM:

DOUBLE IMAGE, *by Roy Vickers* (British Book Centre, $2.50)

and the first of two splendid Australian adventures:

JOURNEY TO THE HANGMAN (Crime Club, $2.95);
THE SANDS OF WINDEE (B. B. C., $3.25), ***by Arthur W. Upfield***

All but unique as a factual study seen through a novelist's eyes was

THE TRIAL OF DR. ADAMS, *by Sybille Bodkin* (Simon & Schuster, $3.75)

No more terrifying psychological study came in the year than March's

DEVIL BY THE SEA, *by Nina Bawden* (Lippincott, $3.50)

March was further noteworthy for the intricate Orientalism of

THE CHINESE BELL MURDERS, *by Robert van Gulik* (Harper, $3.50)

and the intimate perception of a new English novelist in

THE HOURS BEFORE DAWN, *by Celia Fremlin* (Lippincott, $3.50)

as well as the year's best paperback, the compassionate

THE TWISTED ONES, *by Vin Packer* (Gold Medal, 35¢)

April gave us the strongest volume of novelets in some years:

DUO, *by Charlotte Armstrong* (Coward-McCann, $3.50)

and a tourdeforce of macabre psychology and deft deception:

PSYCHO, *by Robert Bloch* (Simon & Schuster, $2.95)

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In May came two beautiful blendings of detection-suspense technique with the straight novel, by an Old Mistress and a fine novice:

THE LISTENING WALLS, *by Margaret Millar* (Random, $3.50)
A DREAM OF FALLING, *by Mary O. Rank* (Houghton Mifflin, $3.50)

along with a grand thriller of police and legal procedures:

BLOOD AND JUDGMENT, *by Michael Gilbert* (Harper, $2.95)

and welcome confirmation that 1958's brightest discovery is one of today's foremost novelists of crime:

THE FOGGY, FOGGY DEW, *by Charity Blackstock* (B. B. C., $2.95)

The summer doldrums were enlivened by a second notable volume of shorts from EQMM:

THE SHORT CASES OF INSPECTOR MAIGRET, *by Georges Simenon* (Crime Club, $2.95)

and the fall season opened with the best of the year's surprisingly many period mysteries, the "Victorian melodrama":

SCANDAL AT HIGH CHIMNEYS, *by John Dickson Carr* (Harper, $3.50)

In September arrived a noble chiller of mood and character:

LAMENT FOR FOUR BRIDES, *by Evelyn Berckman* (Dodd, Mead, $2.95)

and a model of witty social comedy:

NO GRAVE FOR A LADY, *by John & Emery Bonnet* (Crime Club, $2.95)

plus the first of two anthologies unusually gratifying even by their editor's standards:

ELLERY QUEEN'S 14TH MYSTERY ANNUAL (Random, $3.75)
ELLERY QUEEN'S 1960 ANTHOLOGY (Davis, $1)

The later months of fall and winter produced two more collections outstanding in a year of admirable anthologies:

TEN GREAT MYSTERIES, *edited by Howard Haycraft and John Beechcroft* (Doubleday, $4.95)
THE LETHAL SEX, *edited for the Mystery Writers of America by John D. MacDonald* (Dell, 35¢)

and the year was fittingly rounded off with a wise and stimulating critical checklist of great mysteries, 1794-1957:

THE HUNDRED BEST CRIME STORIES, *edited by Julian Symons* (B. B. C., $1)

New writers are the key to the future of any form. In addition to Fremlin and Rank, it was a pleasure, in 1959, to welcome from England John Bryan, Stewart Farrar, Stanley Hyland, Ruth Wadham and John Welcome; from Canada, John Buell; and here at home Holmes Alexander, Virginia Coffman, Thomas Fall, P. J. Merrill and Chandler Nash.

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a ***BONUS*** *novelette by*

EDITORS FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**ERLE STANLEY GARDNER**
TITLE:	***The Case of the Murderer's Bride***
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVES:	Corporal Cortland and Dr. Dixon
LOCALE:	Nevada chiefly
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Lawrence B. Ives had a unique gainful occupation: he was in the business of murdering wives. But when his latest ugly duckling turned into a swan, he began to have doubts—at least, for a time . . .*

LAWRENCE B. IVES HAD TWO BASIC objections to the income tax. He objected to listing his occupation and he was annoyed that his business expenses could never be claimed as a deduction.

Lawrence B. Ives was in the business of murdering women.

So far as Ives was concerned, it was a reasonably safe and highly profitable occupation. It required a certain amount of research work, quite a bit of ingenuity, a pleasing personality, and a lot of reading.

Ives read the newspapers. He read them carefully, concentrating on news of tragic accidents.

Like many of our higher courts, Ives believed in following precedent. One tragic accident would arouse his interest. A duplication of that accident would start a file on the subject. A third such accident would cause him to start looking for a new wife. The fourth accident would then cause him to set his plan in motion.

New wives were not as difficult to find as the accidents.

Lawrence B. Ives never ceased to be astounded at the number of women who had passed the first third of their lives in a dull routine, who were starved for affection, and who had carefully saved their earnings.

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His wives were all of a general type: women who had sacrificed their chances for early romance because of an unselfish devotion to family. After the sisters and brothers had married and the parents had passed away, these self-effacing bread-winners learned to accept vicarious love affairs. Being starved for affection, they frequented the newsstands, buying magazines which dealt with romance, or they spent long evenings in the public libraries.

Larry Ives was 36 years old, but he represented his age as a youthful 48. He spent considerable time and quite a bit of money buying his clothes. He was a good conversationalist and had a way of worming information out of librarians and from the clerks who presided over magazine counters. He also spent quite a bit of his time riding in public conveyances, looking for women who were reading the love-story type of magazine.

In making applications for a marriage license, he never listed his prior matrimonial adventures; but that was a minor omission—one which he regarded as of no greater legal importance than driving 50 miles an hour in a 35-mile zone. He could never be prosecuted for bigamy since, whenever Larry took on a new love, he was always definitely finished with the old. In fact, he made certain that his wives were very, very dead before moving on to his next conquest.

Earlier in his career, Larry had had to work with considerable rapidity. This had caused him to take certain risks. Now, with a large measure of financial stability, thanks to his unique gainful occupation, he didn't need to work so fast.

His current wife had been named Nan Palmer before she became the radiantly happy Mrs. Lawrence B. Ives.

Nan Palmer's outstanding characteristic had been family loyalty. She had had an unselfish devotion to those she loved. Her father had died when she was 12. By the time she was 16, she was supporting her mother, her sister Effie and a younger brother.

Effie had selfish charm and dazzling beauty and was always promising the family a wealth of luxuries after she had "made good in Hollywood." She won a beauty contest when she was 18 and two divorces later had quit writing home.

Nan had put the younger brother through two years of college, and then he was killed in Korea. Her mother had never been strong enough to work, but had lingered on for years.

Nan's salary had been good, but it had all gone for living expenses, the ever-present doctor bills and nursing fees. There had been less and less money for Nan to spend on herself. She had learned to make her own clothes, she never went to

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a beauty shop, and she had adapted her life to a steady routine of drudgery: eight hours at the office, a ride home in a crowded conveyance during the rush hour, shopping at the market, cooking for an invalid, washing the dishes, cleaning up the house, doing the washing and ironing, sewing clothes, tumbling into bed, getting up in the morning to the chore of getting breakfast, washing the dishes, making the beds, and leaving for the office.

After Mrs. Palmer died, Nan had become so immersed in her routine that she didn't know what to do with her leisure. She had never before had leisure. Now, she had time to read and she was thrilled by the adventures of heroines who were swept off their feet by gallant Prince Charmings who were always tall, generous, wavy-haired, thoughtful, handsome, and wealthy.

Nan Palmer was made-to-order for Lawrence B. Ives.

At first, she couldn't believe her senses. It seemed absolutely incredible when, after several chance meetings and brief conversations in the library, it became quite evident that Mr. Ives found her attractive.

Ives had his line down pat. He was, he said, a lonely widower who had traveled around the world. He wanted intellectual as well as physical companionship. He had learned that all is not gold that glitters and that beneath many a plain exterior there beats a warm, affectionate heart which is capable not only of steady affection but which can at times pour forth streams of molten passion. They were married in Yuma, Arizona.

Once having snared his victim into matrimony, it was a part of Ives's campaign to stress his wealth and his exciting plans for their future together. He disapproved of his wife's friends. He wanted to get her away from everything pertaining to her drab past.

None of his requests seemed odd to Nan. She was more than willing to escape from the colorless life she had always lived. She cooperated wholeheartedly by investing his money in beauty treatments, in charm and posture lessons, and in a sizable wardrobe of new clothes. Larry's wife, Nan reasoned, must be groomed to entertain as an attractive and charming hostess. She even took a foreign-language course so that she would be a credit to him when they went abroad. To Nan, life had just begun, and she planned to live it in the fullest possible manner.

The drain on Larry's capital caused him some dismay. It seemed a rather unnecessary expenditure on a woman who would be laid to rest in a few months. But the results, he had to admit, were esthetically satisfying. He was astounded at the change in the woman who had been drab Nan Palmer. She continued to wear her dark

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hair in a manner which best suited her simplicity. Her figure, became strikingly attractive, and her taste in clothes proved to be unerringly chic—as well as consistently expensive.

Her first bashful responses to love had suddenly been swept along on a tide of released emotion until Ives found himself thinking of "retiring" and settling down to enjoy himself with his loving wife.

However, the chains of habit are strong. Sooner or later, a man always returns to what the police list in their files as *modus operandi*. And so there came the day when Ives brought up the matter of life insurance.

Ives didn't care for large policies. He preferred small policies with different companies, and he knew of several companies which wrote insurance by mail. In fact, Ives had a most comprehensive knowledge of life insurance. His wife saw nothing suspicious about this. Her husband had a brilliant mind and a dazzling fund of general information.

After nine months of marriage Nan still couldn't believe her good fortune. She would sit by the hour while Larry was scanning the newspapers, watching him with her heart in her eyes. He was wonderful.

Ives, despite himself, followed his habit of scanning the papers, although somewhat reluctantly. In the past he had always been impatient as he built up his file of unusual but fatal accidents. Now, when he would gladly have taken a more leisurely course, it seemed that suitable accidents were described in every issue of the newspapers.

One class of fatal accident, however, claimed Ives' attention with a certain fascination. These accidents were capable of artistic developments which thrilled the creative urge in his soul.

Ives had three clippings on these: One had occurred on Lake Mead, another on Lake Tahoe, and the third on Lake Edward. The fatalities were such as to lend themselves admirably to Ives' scheme. They were particularly suited to the place at which he had chosen to become a grieving widower.

People went out in boats with outboard motors. The weather was warm, the surface of the lake was flat calm. They stopped the motors and drifted along far out from shore. The urge to jump in for a cooling dip where they needed no bathing suits became irresistible. So over the side they went.

Though the lake was calm, there was a gentle breeze. The weather station placed it at two to five miles an hour. However, because the boat was drifting slowly along with that breeze, the boaters didn't notice it. It wasn't until they had been swimming for a minute or two that they turned their attention to the boat. They saw it some 200 yards

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away. Startled, they started swimming toward the boat.

Panic led them to take a pace they couldn't maintain. For a while they were gaining; then they slowed down in breathless fatigue. The boat glided in effortless mockery, steadily moving, always out of reach. Again the swimmers, lured by the seeming nearness of the boat, spurted into frenzied swimming.

Unless they were unusually strong swimmers they could never make it. The boat would be drifting as fast or a little faster than they could swim. So they became panic-stricken.

By the time the most powerful swimmer in the group, who had worked himself into a state of almost complete exhaustion, finally decided to quit the futile pursuit of the drifting boat, at least one of his companions were missing. Once a swimmer reaches a point of complete exhaustion in fresh water, panic will do the rest.

Three accidents. Ives needed a fourth in order to make his scheme perfect.

He found it on page one of the second section of the paper: DRIFTING BOAT CAUSES TRAGEDY ON HAVASU LAKE.

Larry looked over at his wife. For a long moment he hesitated; then he slipped a sharp penknife from his pocket and cut the clipping from the paper.

"What is it?" Nan asked.

"A report on some mining activities, dear . . . How would you like to take our boat and trailer over to the Colorado River for a while?"

"I'd *love* it, darling!"

Larry sighed, regarded her speculatively, almost wistfully. Then he tightened his lips with firm decision. After all, Ives was a businessman, and the premiums on those insurance policies, not to mention Nan's extravagances, amounted to a fairly heavy outlay.

It was the duty of Corporal Ed Cortland to read all the crank mail that came to the police department.

This mail was of all sorts: rambling dissertations from persons who felt they were being persecuted, anonymous tips from disgruntled neighbors, phony confessions from persons who had no real knowledge of the details of the crimes to which they were confessing. They had read newspapers accounts of some crime, and brooded over it, and finally had sought to make atonement for some real or fancied sin they had committed by confessing to one they hadn't.

Corporal Cortland had a trained eye in such matters. He could spot the type of person who had written the letter from a quick glance at the first paragraph.

The fifty-second letter that he opened on this May morning was different from the others. It read:

"I am writing to the police department because I don't know to whom else I can write.

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"I knew Nan Palmer when she worked up here. She was steady, industrious, a quiet girl who gave the best years of her life to an invalid mother.

"Then Prince Charming came along. He gave the name of Lawrence B. Ives, and he really was handsome. None of us could see why he was so attracted to Nan.

"It was a whirlwind courtship. They took a plane to Yuma and were married. Soon after that they moved away. And Nan never wrote to any of her friends.

"I wouldn't have had any idea where she was living if it hadn't been that an insurance company wanted to find out something about her in connection with an insurance policy she was taking out. The investigator talked with me. He told me she was living somewhere in or near Los Angeles.

"I still thought nothing of it until I happened to be looking through an old illustrated magazine in cleaning out some of the papers in my attic.

"I saw a man's picture and knew there was something familiar about the face. At first, I couldn't place it; then I suddenly realized it was Lawrence B. Ives.

"Only this time he wasn't going under that name, but under the name of Corvallis E. Fletcher.

"His picture had been published in connection with a tragic accident. He had gone up with his wife in a light plane and had persuaded the pilot to do a few stunts. Both passengers had reported their safety belts were firmly fastened, but it turned out that Mrs. Fletcher hadn't understood the proper method of fastening her seat belt. She had been thrown out of the plane and had fallen 3,000 feet.

"As soon as I saw that picture I was certain I'd seen the man before. It isn't a very good picture and he had a mustache at the time, but I feel certain it's the same man. I'm sending the picture along together with the clipping.

"I think the Fletcher accident should be checked, and I think someone had better ask Mr. Ives how it happened he changed his name.

"This is just a hunch, and if you do anything about it, for heaven's sake don't let Nan know that I wrote this letter. I worked with her for several years, and I like her and she used to like me. I don't want her to think I'm getting nosy and interfering in her affairs."

Corporal Cortland put this letter to one side and during the course of the evening mentioned it to his friend Dr. Herbert Dixon, the medicolegal expert on forensic pathology and homicide investigation. Dr. Dixon became interested.

It took the police less than an hour to locate the apartment house where Mr. and Mrs. Ives lived. Dr. Dixon and Corporal Cortland drove around to the place. The manager, a large, friendly woman

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named Mrs. Meehan, explained that Mr. and Mrs. Ives had left on a trip. They had given up the apartment and had loaded some of their baggage into their car; the balance had gone into storage. She understood they were going to live in Arizona. They had taken their boat, outboard motor, and trailer with them.

Mrs. Meehan informed them that Mr. Ives was a remarkable personality—charming, magnetic, polished. His wife was sweet and really beautiful. They were *very* happy together. Mr. Ives didn't work. He evidently had some sort of an independent income. Mrs. Meehan thought he was interested in mining.

Mr. Ives had settled all their bills before they left. They had only been gone a couple of days and the apartment wasn't cleaned up yet. It would be put in shape tomorrow. Mrs. Meehan let Corporal Cortland into the apartment and left him and Dr. Dixon there to look around.

Dr. Dixon found the copy of the newspaper from which a news item had been cut out. The edges of the cut showed that it had been made with a sharp knife held by someone with a steady hand.

Corporal Cortland rang up the newspaper office, got them to check the issue in question and relay the story to him. When he learned that it was a story of a tragic accident in which two swimmers had been lost in Lake Havasu, Dr. Dixon became thoughtful.

A check of the telephone company showed that Ives had paid up his account. The record showed the last toll call on the record was to Searchlight, Nevada.

When Dr. Dixon phoned the Nevada number, the man who answered remembered Ives' call well. He operated a service station, and from his office he could relay calls over a private telephone line which stretched across the desert to Lee Bracket's Eldorado Landing, a distance of 50-odd miles by road.

Ives had asked him to relay a call through to Bracket's to see if accommodations were available, and the reservations had been made.

The service-station manager said that usually when he accommodated people by making reservations for them, they at least did him the courtesy of stopping in at his station to say thank you and to fill up their tanks with gasoline.

Ives had done neither.

After this conversation Dr. Dixon reached a quick decision. "I've been planning on a little vacation, Ed. I'm going to drive down there to the Colorado. Think you could get permission to go along?"

"I could if you recommended it as an investigative job," Corporal Cortland said, grinning.

"I'll recommend it," Dr. Dixon told him . . .

The road to Bracket's camp wound down a long slope from the

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crest of the mountains to the river. The last two or three miles ran past weird rock formations looking like great petrified mushrooms.

Where the Colorado River had once been a turgid, dangerous stream, there was now a clear blue lake stretching from Davis Dam, some 40 miles to the south of Eldorado Wash, to Hoover Dam, 20 miles to the north.

"This," Corporal Cortland announced with conviction, "is the life."

They found Lee Bracket playing cribbage with a tourist whose dour expression was an eloquent reflection of the position of the pegs on the cribbage board.

Lee Bracket didn't discuss his guests with strangers, and Corporal Cortland, correctly interpreting Dr. Dixon's faint shake of the head, refrained from producing his credentils and making the visit official.

They did learn, however, that boats were available for daily rental. A survey of the parking facilities showed that a car bearing Ives's license number and an empty boat trailer were parked in position.

Guarded inquiries of the attendant in charge of the boat landing brought out the information that Ives and his wife were not fishing, but were collecting rocks.

For miles around the camp the slopes were composed of river-worn sand-polished rocks of varying sizes. Even the rankest amateur could pick up beautifully colored agates, jasper, and fossil-encrusted rocks. Some of these could be cut into gem stones; others could be "tumbled" into colorful collections of costume jewelry.

The attendant at the dock described Ives' boat; a 15-footer, red and white, of glass fiber, powered by a 35-h.p. outboard motor, capable of a speed of some 25 miles per hour.

The only boat which was available for renting was considerably slower. Dr. Dixon and Cortland rented this boat and spent the rest of the day in a futile search, Dr. Dixon sweeping his binoculars in a study of every boat they encountered.

They returned to Bracket's just about dark to find Ives' boat tied up at the dock.

While Dr. Dixon stood guard, Corporal Cortland gave the boat the benefit of a swift survey.

A cardboard carton in the bottom contained 20 or 30 pounds of desert agates and jasper. Quite evidently, Mr. and Mrs. Ives had spent most of the day on shore gathering specimens.

In the camp's dining room Dixon and the police officer encountered Mr. and Mrs. Ives, as well as several other guests, in conversation around the large circular dinner table. The two men joined the group and without any indication of their professional pursuit they

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introduced themselves. They were welcomed with friendly informality.

Ives, Dr. Dixon noted, was somewhat reticent, but courteous and affable. Mrs. Ives was a beauty. Her conversation was brisk and intelligent, and her sense of humor was as apparent as her happiness. Nor was there any doubt about her devotion to her husband.

Ives seemed quite solicitous about the weather. He asked repeated questions about the winds. It was clear that he had no intention of getting caught in a storm or rough weather.

"We are really landlubbers at heart," Mrs. Ives laughed. "You don't ever need worry about us," she assured the proprietor. "We only go out when it is pleasant."

Later that night Dr. Dixon discussed the matter with Corporal Cortland. He led the police officer well away from the cabins so that there was no chance of the conversation being overheard.

"I've never seen a woman so bride-eyed. She is desperately in love with him, Ed. We can't afford to make a wrong move. Not only would we be exposing ourselves to a suit for damages and for defamation of character, but what would be even worse, we might be ruining her faith in her husband."

"But we have the dead wood on him," Cortland insisted. "We know he's been going under another name. It's the same guy all right."

Dr. Dixon said, "Suppose he was going under another name? Can we prove it? Even if we could, it's a suspicious circumstance, but that's all. We're going to have to wait until headquarters gets some more information on this Corvallis E. Fletcher."

"Okay by me," Corporal Cortland said with a sudden grin. "This is the most pleasant assignment I've had in twenty years. Only let's not give him so much rope that he can be dangerous."

"We'll try to keep an eye on things," Dr. Dixon said. "We . . ."

He broke off as the door of one of the cabins opened and an oblong of bright light pierced the darkness. A figure was silhouetted against the oblong.

"That's Ives now," Cortland whispered.

Ives, apparently with something under his left arm, stepped out of the cottage, turned to say something over his shoulder, closed the door, and then, producing a small flashlight, started down the sloping road to the wharf landing.

Dr. Dixon tapped Cortland on the arm. The two followed silently, staying in the shadow of the cliff to the south of the road.

They heard Ives' steps on the boards of the wharf.

"He's getting something out of the boat," Cortland whispered.

"Or putting something in," Dr. Dixon said. "We're in a precarious situation here, Ed. He might spot

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our reflections in the water. Let's get down and sit close, so we'll seem to be a shapeless hunk of shadow."

They sat on their heels.

"I'd like to go shake the guy down," Cortland grumbled.

"We can't afford it, Ed—not until we can get a definite identification on that picture. Even then, we've got to find out something more about his background before we dare to move in. I wouldn't make a mistake in this case for worlds. I keep thinking of that look of utter devotion in her eyes! She's hypnotized. It would be a crime to spoil it."

They heard vague, muffled sounds from Ives' boat.

Soon Ives' feet pounded back along the wooden wharf, crunched on the gravel of the road, and then they saw him walking slowly back up the hill to his cabin. He seemed to be carrying something in his right hand.

Dr. Dixon and Corporal Cortland fell in behind so they could see his silhouette against the light from the cabin grounds.

Midway to the cabins, Ives stopped at the garbage-disposal barrel and tossed something in. Then he walked on up to the cabin door. A moment later he was flooded with light from the interior of the cabin. The watchers saw a pair of arms circle his neck. Ives stepped inside, the door was closed, and it was dark once more.

"Now what the hell!" Cortland said. "He went down to the boat for some purpose. Do you suppose he's suspicious of us and went down to see if we'd been examining the boat?"

Dr. Dixon shook his head. "He didn't even look back when he went down to the boat or when he returned to the cabin He isn't suspicious—unless, of course, he's *very* suspicious and is laying a trap for us. The first thing we must do is to see what he tossed into that barrel."

They waited a half hour, then Corporal Cortland led the way to the disposal barrel and played his flashlight on the contents.

The big metal drum was three-quarters full: empty tin cans, cardboard cartons, a pair of discarded tennis shoes.

"It must have been the tennis shoes," Cortland said.

Dr. Dixon leaned over to study the barrel carefully.

"It has to be on the surface, Ed," he said. "He didn't bend over the barrel, as would have been necessary if he had shoved anything down. He just dropped something in. Moreover, if he had moved anything, these empty cans would have made a clatter."

"It *has* to be the tennis shoes." Cortland decided.

"Let's take an inventory," Dr. Dixon said. "There's a can which held grapefruit and orange juice; there are a pork-and-beans can, a cereal carton, two dishwashing

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detergent boxes, a tomato juice can; here are two empty sardine cans, a newspaper, the tennis shoes, a pair of badly bedraggled socks and . . . Wait a minute, what's this? Here's a pair of pliers with one of the jaws broken off."

"It must have been the tennis shoes," Cortland said.

He picked them up. The shoes had been badly worn down to the point where the sole on the right shoe had a circle which had worn almost through.

"A tennis player," Cortland said. "He pivots on his right foot when he serves. Notice how the right shoe is worn more than the left."

Dr. Dixon remained thoughtfully silent.

"Not convinced?" Cortland asked.

"I don't want to jump to conclusions," Dr. Dixon said. "Let's go take a look at the boat."

"I'd like to shake the guy down," Ed said.

"Take it easy," Dr. Dixon cautioned. "We'll see what's inside of that boat."

"Do you suppose he could have planted a bomb in the boat, one that's due to explode tomorrow sometime?"

"Anything's possible," Dr. Dixon said, "but we've got to have evidence before we make any move."

They searched the boat thoroughly. It contained a paddle, an anchor attached to 50 feet of new rope, a spare gasoline tank for the motor, two kapok-filled cushions which could be used as life preservers in an emergency. There were no fishing rods, no bait boxes, nothing to indicate that the boat had ever been used except for hunting rocks. There was, however, a new ice pick. There was no sign of anything that could possibly have been used to conceal a bomb.

"He didn't put anything *in* the boat," Ed said at length. "He took something *out*."

"He had something with him when he went down to the boat," Dr. Dixon pointed out.

"The tennis shoes, Doctor?"

"Why should he take the tennis shoes down to the boat, stay in the boat a while, then turn around, bring the same tennis shoes back, and throw them away?"

"How do we know they're the *same* tennis shoes?" Cortland asked. "Suppose he bought a new pair of tennis shoes. He had left his old ones in the boat. He went down to the boat, put on his new tennis shoes, picked up the old tennis shoes, took them back and threw them away."

"Then these old tennis shoes had been left in the boat?" Dr. Dixon asked.

"Yes."

"He walked down to the boat carrying new tennis shoes with him, put on the new tennis shoes down here, and took the old tennis shoes back. That doesn't make sense and it still leaves an extra

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pair of shoes. What happened to the shoes he was wearing when he walked down to the boat?"

Cortland thought that over. "I guess I'm getting ahead of myself, Doc," he admitted. "But I still think the tennis shoes are the key to the whole thing. Let's go back to the cabin and get to bed. We can't do anything more here."

It was four o'clock in the morning when Nan Ives suddenly awoke. She lay still, her heart beating rapidly as though she had been startled. Then, as she felt the secure warmth of Larry's arms around her, she relaxed and sighed happily.

"Let's get up, darling," Larry whispered.

She turned toward him.

"Now? It's so early."

"It's wonderful out. The stars are blazing. It will be light by the time we get the boat going, and we can see the dawn out on the lake."

She smiled. "Just as you say, dearest," she said, and she kissed him.

While they were dressing she said, "What about breakfast?"

"That," he said, "is the nice part of it. We'll go down to Cottonwood Cove for breakfast. The scenery is beautiful on the way down there and they have a snug little restaurant with good cooking. You'll love it."

Fifteen minutes later they were moving arm in arm, walking down the sloping roadway toward the water.

The east was beginning to show light. Already a slight tinge of color brightened the eastern sky. Overhead and to the west, however, the stars were steady, blazing, and brilliant; the air was warm and balmy. The water was like a sheet of glass, reflecting the eastern sky, the stars, and the dark outlines of the mountains which bordered the lake.

Larry helped his wife into the boat, saw that she was comfortably ensconced on a seat cushion, and having untied the boat, pushed off into the warm half-darkness.

Dr. Herbert Dixon, awakening early, showered, dressed, and returned to the bedroom where Corporal Ed Cortland was sleeping soundly.

The criminologist stood over Cortland with a wet washcloth in his hand and squeezed a single drop of cold water on Cortland's forehead.

The officer twisted his face in an expression of distaste. A second drop following the first caused him to sit up, throwing off the covers.

"Hey!" he said thickly.

Dr. Dixon grinned. "Come on, up and at 'em boy! This is a new day."

"What time is it?"

"Six o'clock."

"Go away, that's too early. No need to get up yet. We can't even get any coffee. The people that run

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this place don't stay here; they live seven miles up the road."

"Never mind coffee," Dr. Dixon said. "We'll reconnoiter. Perhaps we can have a chance to talk with Ives before breakfast."

"Slave driver," Cortland groaned, getting out of bed.

Dr. Dixon plugged in his electric shaver and by the time Cortland was half through with his shower the criminologist was out walking slowly down the road to the water, inhaling the freshness of the early morning.

He moved toward the dock, then suddenly stiffened to attention, whirled, and started walking rapidly back up the hill to the cabins.

"Hey, Ed." he said, "Ives' boat is gone."

"You kidding?" Cortland asked.

"No. It's not there."

"What about the automobile and the trailer?"

"They're here."

"Then they must have taken off for some rock hunting. They'll be back for breakfast."

Dr. Dixon frowned. "Hang it!" he said. "Perhaps Ives *did* suspect us. If anything happens . . . Well, it'll be just too bad for him, that's all."

"Don't be too sure," Cortland said pessimistically, "You have to have proof, and the trouble with accidents is that the survivor always tells a plausible story, he's the only witness, and . . ."

"Come on," Dr. Dixon said, "let's go."

"Upstream or down?"

"We start upstream," Dr. Dixon said. "They were downstream yesterday. They've probably gone up today."

"We can't get breakfast anywhere up there."

"Yes, we can. Willow Beach. Twelve miles or so. We can be having hot coffee in an hour if you'll just get started."

They made the run up to Willow Beach. They saw majestic scenery, towering vertical cliffs reflected in placid water, the golden line of sunlight crawling slowly down the mountains. But there was no sign of Mr. and Mrs. Ives.

At Willow Beach they stopped for a fast breakfast and talked with a fisherman who had been out early and who said no boat had gone by.

Hurrying from the restaurant, they gassed up, opened the motor wide, and headed downriver. They gassed again at Bracket's. By this time the sunlight was warm. The lake seemed calm, but looking along the reflected path of the sun one could see the glint of small ripples.

Corporal Cortland was running the motor. Dr. Dixon was carefully scanning the lake with the binoculars, frowning impatiently at the numerous coves in which a small craft might find concealment. Dr. Dixon felt they didn't have the time

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to go into each one of those coves. A sixth sense gave him a feeling of urgency.

He wanted desperately to catch sight of Ives' boat. Something seemed to tell him that this was the crucial day. It was exactly the sort of day that had been described in the newspaper clipping—warm with a faint breeze and the urge to swim becoming more and more a temptation.

Both above and below Bracket's camp a rough attempt had been made to designate the miles by painting figures in white on rocks along the shore, or by arranging whitewashed rocks in the form of figures.

At seven miles below the landing Ed Cortland mistook the channel and went into a big bay, which finally curved back to disclose the true channel. Going around a point, they came to where the lake broadened out into a vast sheet of water.

Now, from time to time, they saw other small boats. This caused more loss of time. Dr. Dixon had to study each boat with binoculars. Nor did he dare stop passers-by to give them a description of Ives' boat and to ask if they had seen it. He did not want Ives to know that he was taking an unusual interest in him.

After the nine-mile sign Dr. Dixon found no more signs. There was, he felt, a ten-mile sign, but somewhere he had missed it. A growing tension developed within him.

He moved aft to sit beside Ed Cortland at the tiller.

"Ed," he said, "I've thought of something."

"What?"

"The thing that happened last night. We looked into that trash barrel and . . ."

"And saw those tennis shoes," Cortland interrupted.

"That's what fooled us," Dr. Dixon said. "Everything else that was in there was something you would have expected to find in a disposal unit out in front of cabins. The tennis shoes were unusual, so they attracted attention. Everything else was perfectly ordinary, except perhaps the broken pliers."

"What are you getting at?" Cortland asked.

"Ives threw something in there." Dr. Dixon said. "We thought it might have been the tennis shoes because they were unusual, but we can't make his action in doing that sound logical because he carried something down with him under his left arm, and when he came back, he dropped something in the barrel." He paused. "There were two empty detergent boxes in it."

"But what would a detergent have to do with murder?"

Dr. Dixon indicated the cushion on which he was seated. "The Coast Guard requires life preservers in a boat," he said. "These cushions are filled with kapok. They act in the

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dual capacity of seat cushions and life preservers. The kapok is exceedingly light and it's oil and water-resistant. It's buoyant, not only because of its own lightness, but because the oily surface repels the water and holds lots of air bubbles trapped within the matted interior of the light, fluffy substance.

"Now, then, a detergent is a peculiar chemical compound. It consists of a substance which has an affinity both for oil and for water. It's as though you had a long molecule, one end of which is fastened to the oil, the other end fastened to the water."

"What are you getting at?"

"Put enough powdered detergent inside one of these seat cushions and throw it in the water," Dr. Dixon continued, "and for a while nothing will happen. The outer surface is water-repellent, but the minute water starts getting in, it will mingle with the powdered detergent and then more water will start getting in. The minute the powdered detergent mingles with the water, it becomes a wetting agent and the cushion will rapidly lose its buoyancy.

"When detergents were first invented, they conducted an experiment by putting a duck in water to which a detergent had been added. The wetting agent caused the oily feathers of the duck to attract water; the duck sank to the bottom of the tank and would have drowned if they hadn't taken it out."

Ed Cortland looked at Dr. Dixon. "Then you think that Ives . . ."

"I think," Dr. Dixon said, "that Lawrence Ives might have gone down to his boat, cut small openings in those kapok cushions, and filled both of them with powdered detergent. Then he might have punched holes in the covers with that ice pick and put small pieces of tape over the cuts to keep the kapok from working out. In the event of an 'accident,' they would have to rely on the life preservers. And if Mrs. Ives can't swim . . ." Dr. Dixon left the sentence significantly unfinished.

"Good heavens!" Cortland said. "That clipping was about a swimming accident."

Dr. Dixon nodded. "Exactly. Suppose you were going swimming where you expected an accident might take place. Where would you go?"

"What do you mean?"

"Not out here in the main channel where a fishing boat might come by in time to perform a spectacular rescue. You'd go out where you could have privacy. Remember when we came around that stretch we left a long sweep of water behind us back from the main channel. It's just a hunch, Ed, and time is running out, but let's take it."

Corporal Ed Cortland swung the boat in a sharp turn.

Lawrence Ives stopped the motor of the boat and smiled at his wife.

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"This is so beautiful darling," he said, "let's just sit here and admire the scenery."

Slowly the boat lost headway until the waves of the churning wake became gentle ripples; then the placid calm of the lake surrounded them.

"Not quite calm enough for the reflections to be clear," Ives said, "but the air is still and beautiful."

They sat in silence for a while, and then Nan slipped her hand confidingly into Larry's. "I'm so completely happy," she said. "I never knew what a difference being in love could make."

"Neither did I," Larry said absently.

The minutes passed. Each was absorbed with thoughts. Nan was soaking in the beauties, basking in the warmth. Larry was carefully studying the lake, the shore line, and the almost imperceptible drift.

He lit a cigarette and tossed the match overboard. The distance between the match and the boat widened, despite the fact that the boat seemed to be stationary. It was as though some mysterious force had started moving the match away from the boat.

"Let's take a swim," Ives suggested suddenly.

"We didn't bring our suits," Nan protested.

"Out here, we don't need them," Ives said. "Let's jump in and . . ."

"But, Larry, I don't swim very well."

"I know you don't, but you don't need to," he assured her. "We'll take our cushions along. They're life preservers, you know. There's no one out here to see us. Look at that water. Isn't it irresistible?"

It took only a little more persuasion; then she slipped out of her clothes and went over the side.

Ives tossed her a cushion from the rear seat, stripped, took the other cushion, and jumped overboard.

They splashed about in the water as gaily as children.

Ives surreptitiously studied the boat. It was drifting just as he had expected. Now he was in a foolproof position. If some boat came along and rescued them, they could tell the story of an ordinary boating mishap. No significance would ever be attached to it. If, on the other hand, no boat came along . . . In a short time Lawrence B. Ives would be ready once more to enjoy a period of complete freedom and relaxation.

Oddly enough, the thought of being free again did not excite him so much as it had on previous similar occasions. As he had watched Nan slip into the water, there had been a sharp stab of reluctance at the thought of losing her. It was not a pang of conscience; Lawrence Ives had no conscience. It was just that he realized that what Nan had said about being in love was true.

With a self-discipline that came from rigid training, he turned his mind to the insurance, and to the

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thoughts of the luxury and the variety it would afford him. It was at that moment that Nan noticed the boat.

"Look how far we've come, Larry," she cried.

"Good heavens!" Ives said. *"We* haven't moved! It's the boat that's drifting! There must be a wind. Stay right here and cling to the cushion, darling. Hold it tight against you. I'm going after the boat."

"Can you catch it?" she asked.

"I think so," he assured her. "I'll put my cushion under my chest and swim. I think I can make it. In any event, the cushion will keep me afloat and you'll be perfectly safe waiting right here. I'll get the boat and bring it back."

He swam away without once looking back.

Cortland piloted their boat back to the bend in the river.

"Now veer off to the left. Let's try that broad expanse up there," Dr. Dixon suggested. He moved up to the bow to study the situation with his glasses.

Suddenly he called, "Over there to the right, Ed. That looks like Ives' boat."

"I can't see it," Ed shouted above the roar of the motor.

"It's off to the right. You can't see it without the glasses. Move over a little. Steady. There you are. Hold it right on this course."

Dr. Dixon braced himself, holding the binoculars to his eyes. The boat surged ahead, making only fair speed with its small motor.

After a while Cortland shouted, "I can see it now, Doc. What do you make out?"

Dr. Dixon was silent for a moment; then he moved back to where Cortland was at the motor. "There's no one in it, Ed," he said grimly. "It's drifting with the slight breeze, but I can't see anyone in it."

Corporal Cortland's lips tightened. "When that guy tells his story it had better be *good,"* he muttered.

Dr. Dixon began turning his head, sweeping the binoculars across the water. Suddenly he reached over to grasp Corporal Cortland's arm. "Turn it back to the left, Ed. Over there. Someone's in the water."

"Where?"

"Swing it around! Over to the left. . . . Not quite so far. Keep going."

A little over three minutes later Ed slowed the boat next to the head and shoulders of Mrs. Lawrence B. Ives.

"You need help?" Dr. Dixon called.

"Yes, yes. Oh, please help him," she sobbed. "My husband, my husband!"

"Come on aboard. I'll give you a hand," Dr. Dixon said.

"I'm . . . I have no suit. . . ."

"I'm a doctor," Dixon said. "We

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have a coat you can put around you. Come on."

They helped her aboard, covering her with a coat.

"What happened?" Dr. Dixon asked.

Her eyes were dark with panic.

"Larry," she said. "My husband. Oh, you must find him! You must! He's in the lake near here somewhere. He took off after our boat, and then I heard him calling and calling and then I didn't hear him any more. I tried to push my cushion through the water, but . . ."

"Take it easy now, take it easy," Corporal Cortland said. "Tell us exactly what happened."

"We stopped the boat and went swimming, and there was a current or a wind or something, and the boat started drifting. I'm not a good swimmer. Larry isn't a *strong* swimmer, but he thought he could take after the boat. He told me to hang on to my life preserver and not to let go of it no matter what happened."

Dr. Dixon and Corporal Cortland exchanged glances.

First, they went to the empty boat. Dr. Dixon picked up Nan Ives' clothes. The men turned their backs while she dressed. Then they started combing the water carefully, covering every inch. They retrieved the kapok cushion to which the woman had been clinging. There was no sign of the other cushion.

And there was no sign of Lawrence B. Ives.

They searched for nearly two hours before they reluctantly admitted defeat. Dr. Dixon, with the painstaking attention to detail of a trained criminologist, had made cross-bearings showing the exact location of the tragedy. With Ives' boat in tow, they headed toward Cottonwood Cove.

Mrs. Ives was inconsolable. "Why, oh, why, did that have to happen to us?" she said. "We were *so* happy, so wonderfully, deliriously happy; and now . . ."

Again Dr. Dixon exchanged significant glances with Corporal Cortland.

"Just bear up, ma'am," the Corporal said. "It's tough, all right, but time heals all wounds."

At Cottonwood Cove they organized a searching party. The wife of one of the owners fixed Nan Ives up in a chair on the cool porch of the luxurious floating dock. Dr. Dixon sat with her for a while, talking quietly, consoling her.

He and Corporal Cortland held a brief conference before going out to join the searching party.

"Get this straight, Ed," Dr. Dixon said. "She's never to know about any of this. Let her have the memory of a perfect marriage."

"Who do you think is going to tell her?" Cortland asked.

"I was afraid you might have ideas," Dr. Dixon admitted.

"I'm not *that* dumb," Cortland

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protested. "It's better for her to spend the rest of her life being true to the memory of one of nature's noblemen than to go back to being a wallflower."

Dr. Dixon laughed. "She may have been a wallflower when Ives married her, but she has turned into an orchid now. With a face and figure like hers it won't be long before a string of eligible males will be trying to make her forget the tragedy that made her a wealthy widow?"

"Wealthy?" Cortland repeated, and his eyebrows raised.

Dr. Dixon nodded. "Mrs. Ives mentioned that she and her husband had joint insurance policies and joint bank accounts—payable to the survivor. It was her idea, not that she ever thought of personal gain. She wanted them for the protection of their future children."

Dr. Dixon shook his head. "She seems to have outwitted him all around. But what puzzles me is how Ives happened to grab the *wrong* life preserver. Evidently, he put detergent in only one cushion. How the devil did he make the mistake?" He frowned suddenly. "Do you suppose *she* could have switched the cushions?

Cortland shook his head. "I did," he admitted. "When we were down looking over their boat last night."

Dr. Dixon stared at him. "Do you mean to say you knew what Ives had in mind?"

"Hell, no," Cortland confessed. "I just swapped those cushions around as a matter of principle. Just good old police routine. I knew we were dealing with a crook and I acted automatically. It is an axiom of police procedure—never let a crook leave a setup!"

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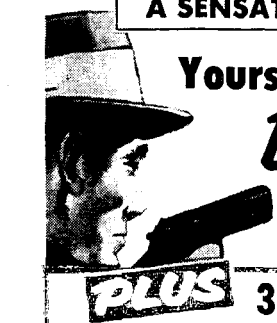

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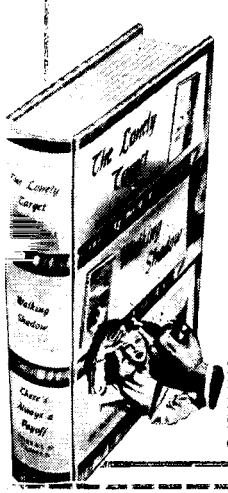

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